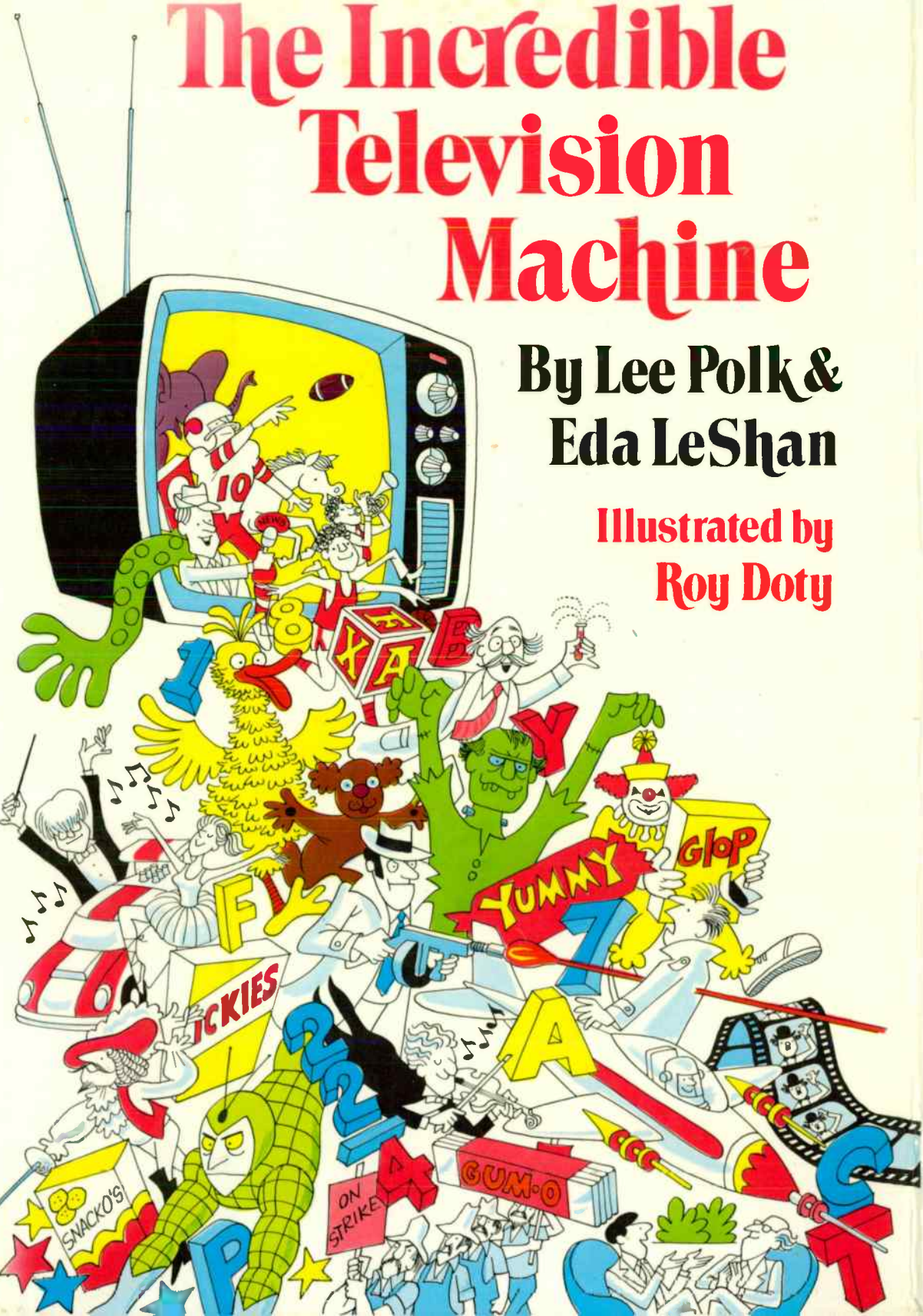
The Incredible Television Machine

By Lee Polk &
Eda LeShan

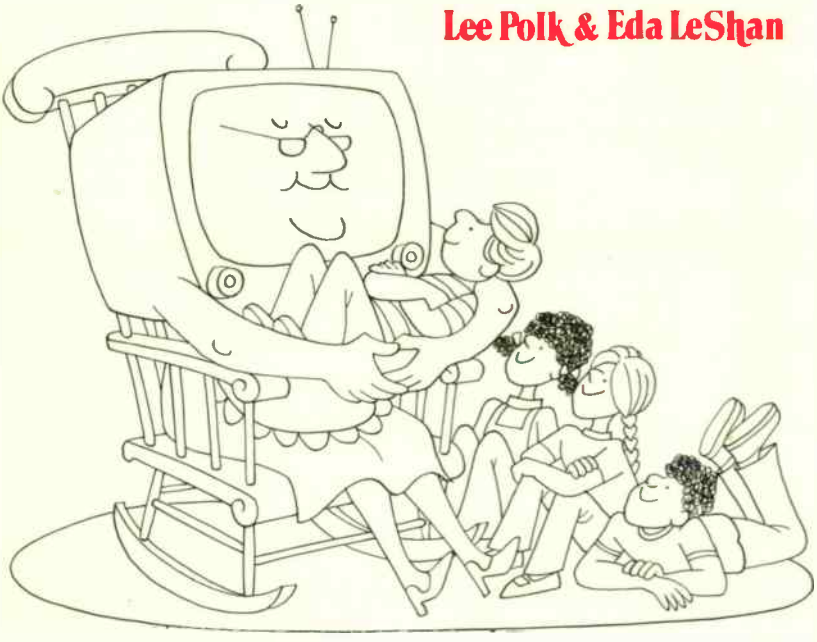
Illustrated by
Roy Doty



The Incredible Television Machine

"Television can be amazingly effective. Producers and directors know how to hold your attention for long periods of time and that takes knowing a great deal about you and the rest of the audience. To understand just how they do it, let's go behind the scenes to learn the trade secrets that are designed to keep you a constant and loyal audience. We want to do this because either television can use you or you can use television for your own best needs and interests. We think that the right way is for this incredible television machine to work for an even more incredible machine—you."

Lee Polk & Eda LeShan



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LEE POLK & EDA LESHAN

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edicated especially to Bonnie, Joanne and David—
and to all children everywhere who will inherit the
use of television for themselves and each other.

Contents

THE INCREDIBLE TELEVISION MACHINE

Introducing Ourselves

Who Is Lee Polk?

I would like to thank my friend Lee Polk for letting me share this book with him. It is really his book.

Lee began working in television when both he and television were very young. He has worked in every part of television; he has been a writer, a director, a producer; he has worked in news, public affairs, entertainment and programs for young people. The truth is, I don't know *anybody* who knows more about television than he does. Right now he is the Director of Television and Motion Pictures for King Features. Before that he was a director of children's television of the American Broadcasting Company. He is also the president of the New York Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, and a trustee of the National Academy. He has taught courses about television at New York University, Fordham University and the New School for Social Research. You may have seen programs for which he was largely responsible, such as the Afterschool Specials on ABC-TV, or a series of lovely folk tales on National Educa-

tional Television called "Masquerade," some very special programs with Beverly Sills, Cyril Ritchard, Danny Kaye and Kukla, Fran and Ollie. You may remember "The Soupy Sales Show"; "Wonderama with Sonny Fox"; "Eye on New York"; "The Magic Cottage"; "The Merry Mailman"; "The Twilight Zone." At one time or another Lee has worked as a writer, director, producer, executive producer—or all four!—of these and many, many other programs.

But the truth is that none of these things made me want to write this book with him. Most important of all, he has always believed that television can be magical, that it can bring exciting and wonderful things into our lives; and he has worked harder than anyone I know to help this happen.

There have been times when he has felt discouraged and frustrated. Often television has not been all those good and beautiful things he wants it to be. But he has never stopped trying to make it the best it can possibly be.

In the years in which I have been lucky enough to know and work with Lee Polk, I have often thought of him as a kind of Pied Piper, who cares so much about his work that he is able to make many people follow him wherever he goes, trying to make television better and better. I am one of those people.

Eda LeShan

What Is an Eda LeShan?

If I had six million dollars to make a person, I would not create the Bionic Man or Woman. I would use the money to design a very special human being. It would be someone who would help me enjoy my life by showing me what is important and what isn't. This creation of mine would find joy in all the beautiful people and things that exist everywhere and would help me to see them all. My six-million-dollar thing would also show me how to express myself, whether it is to laugh or cry, so that I understood my real feelings.

The bad news is that no one is giving me even six cents to build such a person. The good news is no one has to. She exists. Her name is Eda LeShan.

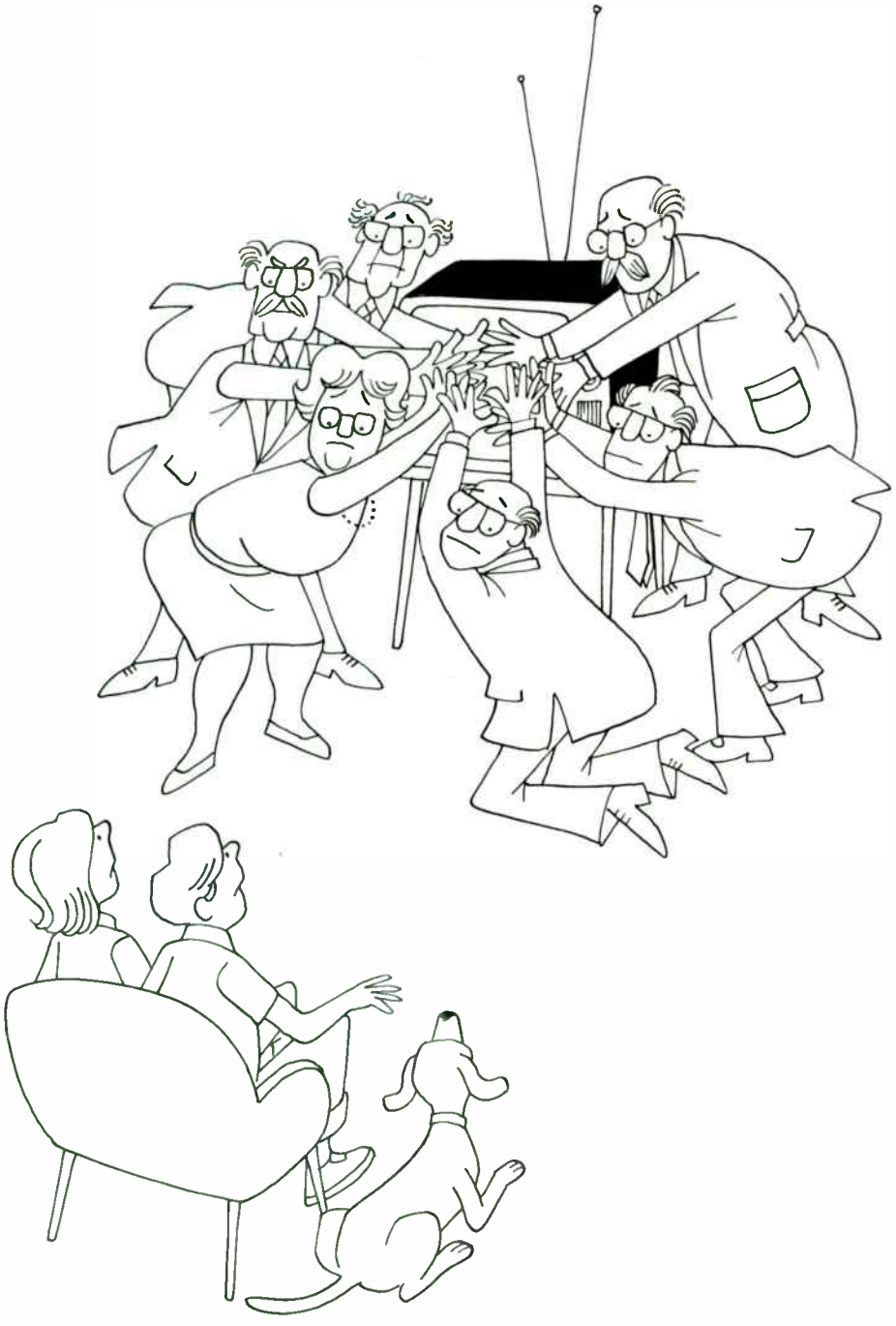
She is an educator and a family counselor. She has helped both parents and children understand each other better. She has written a dozen books about all kinds of things that are important to all kinds of people. Some of those things happen to be about growing up, marriage, divorce, loneliness, dying and even the fun of watching television. On the ABC Television Network she did a series of spots suggesting that parents would have a wonderful time enjoying television with their children. On Public Broadcasting for three years, she was the hostess-moderator of a series called "How Do Your Children Grow?"—for parents, of course.

One lovely part of Eda LeShan is that she is a very touchable human being. People stop her in the street and talk to her as if she were a close relative. I have been with her when that happened and these are moments to remember. Some people actually say, "You have changed my life, Eda. Thank you."

I met Eda during a television series. She appeared on a news program as a commentator on anything she wanted to talk about. She has that rare quality that comes over well on television: she is very honest with her audience. I learned a great deal by listening to her. It occurred to me that there ought to be many more Eda LeShans helping people who produce programs to do them more honestly and better. When I was involved with helping to produce dramas for children, I was very pleased that Eda could act as a consultant. It seems only natural that if there should be a book about television and children it should need someone who worked in television and someone who understood children.

Come to think of it, I would still like the six million dollars. I would use it to send Eda all over the world to meet people personally. The world would be a better place if that were to happen.

Lee Polk



Hey, What Are You Doing to My Friend?

What's going on here? There was a time when you could sit down to watch your favorite show on television and you would know what to expect. But today there are all kinds of unexplained and, as old-time comedian Jimmy Durante would have put it, "revolting developments."

For example, you could turn on the set expecting to see your favorite weekly detective show and find that the series has been moved to another day or time—or maybe it has been taken off the air completely. That never used to happen to "Star Trek" or "Mod Squad."

Or maybe you are watching your favorite program. It's the exciting part—the chase between the undercover agent and that brilliant but crazy inventor who is going to blow up the entire factory and everyone in it unless our agent gets to the bomb in time. Suddenly your parents, one or both, arrive and make the announcement, "You have watched enough television for the night. It's time to do your homework" (which you were going to do "Right after the program, I promise!"). Or they say it's time to clean your room, go to bed or do anything *except* watch any more television. They

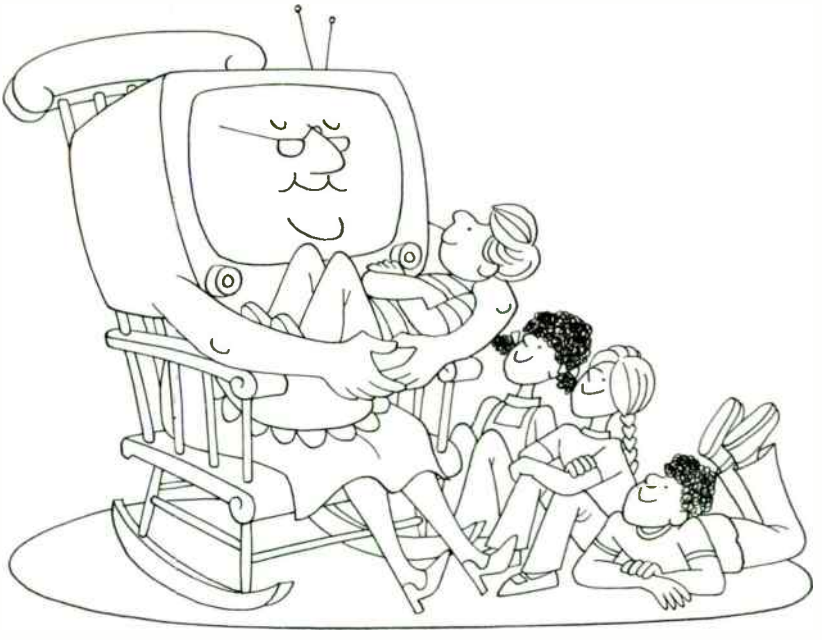
might even go so far as to do the thing that irritates you the most—they might turn the set off.

These could hardly be the same parents who thought it was just wonderful for you to watch "Sesame Street" or "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood," because "you will learn so much." They would deposit you in front of the magical box with such comments as, "Mommy and Daddy are going to sleep a little later on Saturday morning, so you can watch the cartoons until we get up. Okay?" And was that ever okay! All those marvelous characters that became so familiar to you that you thought of them as part of your family: Popeye, Scooby Doo, Courageous Cat and Minute Mouse, Superman—and of course, the champ of them all, even if he says so himself, Bugs Bunny. You knew everything about those "friends": how they would act in certain situations, what they would say: "What's up, Doc!" or "Yabba dabba doo!"

Now all of a sudden people are telling you that watching television is not one of your healthier activities! In some instances, television networks have actually taken programs off the air because of criticism that they are "too violent." Who are all these people and why are they saying those nasty things about television?

You may have guessed that the critics are all adults. It always seems to be grownups who try to spoil your fun because "It is bad for you." But it isn't just your parents; this group includes teachers, psychologists, researchers, medical doctors and people from Congress.

One of the things these people are concerned about is the number of hours that you watch television each day. You may be amazed to learn that by the time you are sixteen, you probably will have viewed about twenty thousand hours



of television! By the age of sixteen you will also have watched (and been influenced by) something like three hundred thousand commercials! What's more, television takes up more of your time than school (TV is seven days a week, of course). In fact, television takes up more time than *everything* except sleeping. It begins to sound like a lot of watching.

"So what?" you may say. After all, you eat three meals a day. If you counted up all the food you ate by the time you were sixteen, it might add up to twenty tons! But you have to eat to live, so what is so important about the amount, as long as the diet is reasonable and well balanced?

"Aha!" say those complaining adults (who like to say "Aha" any time they think they have the perfect answer). "The *diet* of television is exactly what's bothering us, especially in the case of *growing* children." And then they will more than likely tell you what they think is wrong with the shows that are available for young people:

TELEVISION IS TOO VIOLENT

This includes Bugs Bunny's putting his finger in Elmer Fudd's shotgun, which blows up in Elmer's face, as well as whatever happens on any of the police dramas—the killings and the beatings, especially. All this violence, critics say, has an influence on you, making you think that human beings aren't very important and that life is not especially valuable, to say the least. They also say that the loud, fast, violent action will make you more aggressive. Some researchers have reported that children seem to get meaner toward each other after watching shoot-'em-ups. If a program has a great deal of action—people shooting each other, many fist fights and karate chops—you may notice that afterwards you feel even more irritated than usual when your parents say it is time to wind up your television viewing. Or, if your brother has played one of your records without your permission, you may get angrier than you did when the same thing happened a while back.

TELEVISION IS TOO COMMERCIAL

Every few minutes someone is trying to sell you something you don't need. In fact, say some critics, you end up being the salesperson for the product when you ask your parents to buy goods and toys that are usually unnecessary. They also claim that most commercials are designed to give you the feeling that if you don't have a certain product there is something the matter with you. For example, one commercial makes you feel that unless you have a particular brand of sneakers you probably won't make the team. Not only is that not true, but you have enough worries about your being accepted on any kind of team without their help!

TELEVISION IS TOO UNREAL

Critics also claim that television seems to present too much of a fantasy world, usually through animation but also in dramas. Superheroes and heroines—from the Bionic Man to Wonder Woman—lead youngsters to believe that the solution to most problems is through supernormal powers. Some psychologists say that children feel that they are helpless because they are ordinary and they feel disappointed because their parents and teachers are only human. Such an overabundance of fantasy doesn't help young people learn to deal with reality.

Even the laughter you sometimes hear isn't real. To make sure you know that situations are really funny, producers think they need the help of a laugh machine, which is a tape recording, called a laugh track, of people laughing in different ways. There are laugh "experts," technicians who can bring you titters, guffaws and belly laughs by pressing the right button.

TELEVISION IS TOO VISUAL

Television, say the voices of doom, is turning us into a nation of nonreaders. Children are not reading books because they can watch all the dramas, see all the special events they are interested in and even get their education without having to concentrate on the printed page. In addition, the *pleasure* in reading never has a chance to be discovered.

Doctors worry because your eyes were not designed to stare at anything for hours; they worry about eyestrain. Other concerned adults say that children are losing opportunities to use their imagination because of TV. Books,

they say, are quite different; while people are being entertained, they are still having to imagine their own scenes and characters—how people look, what they are doing, etc. Television serves it all up, leaving nothing to the imagination.

TELEVISION WASTES VALUABLE TIME

Instead of spending your time getting needed exercise, playing, thinking, working, traveling, spending time with friends, you are sitting in front of the Tube. You are getting a stiff neck and tired muscles from not moving enough; you are forgetting how to talk or carry on a conversation. This unnatural act of sitting and staring is making you irritable and restless. There is too little time left for *doing,* rather than just passively *watching.* The waste of valuable time is one of the major worries of this group of critical adults.

Wow! How can something that you think is a lot of fun make so many people so upset and angry?

But before you put down this book and run to protect your television set, HEAR THIS: not everyone agrees with these criticisms of television. Or if they do agree in part, they say the situation is at least more complicated than it seems. For every claim that there is something wrong, there are many people—television programmers (many of whom are parents), advertisers, teachers and parents—who think there are many things very right about television:

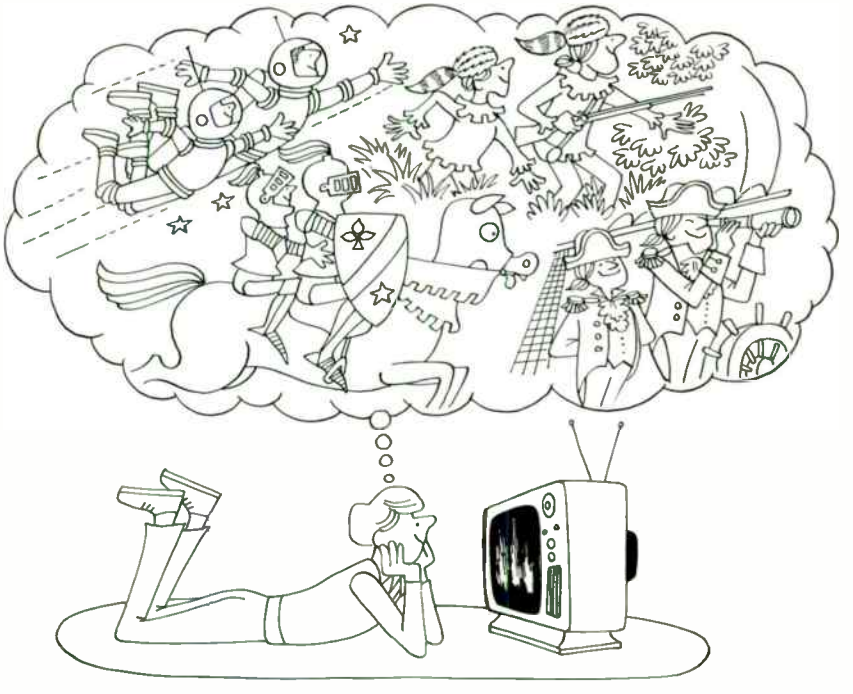
VIOLENCE IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

Most studies have shown that the children who are influenced the most by violence on television are already

"potentially aggressive." Some people say that such children need help and understanding for dealing directly with their personal problems and that television cannot be held solely responsible for making a child feel angry and hostile. Other influences must be taken into account, such as living in a dangerous neighborhood or being made to feel unloved and unwanted.

Another point to consider is that many adults grew up with Popeye and Bugs Bunny and shoot-'em-up Westerns and most of them did not turn out to be violent. And wasn't there violence before there was television? Many fairy tales are extremely violent, as are some plays by Shakespeare. And isn't "the real world" we see on the news programs the most violent of all?

Some experts also feel that watching make-believe violence is a helpful and healthy way to "work off steam," to experience these kinds of feelings without hurting oneself or other people.



TELEVISION COMMERCIALS ARE NECESSARY AND EVEN ENTERTAINING

Advertisers feel that their commercials provide information as well as entertainment. They say that by watching commercials carefully you can become a better-informed consumer.

Television executives say that commercials are the best way to pay for programs. Public Broadcasting has no product commercials and it survives by getting money from the public, from private foundations, major corporations and from the federal government. But Public Broadcasting is always in need of money. And most people are against the idea of our government's running television. The only alternative, they say, is commercials.

FANTASY ON TELEVISION IS NOT HARMFUL—AND ANYWAY, IT'S GETTING BETTER!

Saturday morning now has as many live-action programs as it has animation. And, says the pro-television group, children are more mature than ever before and can discriminate between fact and fantasy. They know that a fantasy character flying through outer space is part of a pretend world that has nothing to do with reality. (Of course, the difference is not always so clear. When most of your parents were children, radio programs about going to the moon or Mars were considered fantasy!)

Quite a few adults feel that television programs which are done with good taste and imagination can actually stimulate a child's own creativity. Some television viewing may even give children ideas about making up their own stories or poems or pictures.

Comedies today are also more real than they used to be.

Women have more important and intelligent roles. Slowly (too slowly, some say) blacks, Puerto Ricans and other minority groups are represented with more respect and fewer stereotypes. Issues and events that are of real concern to young people are discussed openly. Subjects such as birth and death, physical handicaps, divorce, honesty and cheating, love and anger, are often the focus of today's programs, even if the programs themselves are aimed primarily at being entertaining rather than serious.

More programs are produced with live audiences, so the laughter is more honest. Anyway, say some of the program creators, exaggeration has always been an important and necessary part of comedy. And in a world where we have so many things to worry about, why shouldn't people have a chance to forget their troubles and enjoy themselves? Some of the greatest artists (Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, and Woody Allen) may seem "silly," but very often they are really telling us a lot about ourselves.

OF COURSE TELEVISION IS VISUAL—AND THAT'S JUST FINE!

In September, 1976, *TV Guide* ran an article about how television is actually helping some children to read! Psychologists and educators were quoted as saying that the proper use of TV by teachers could make readers and writers of some students who had completely turned away from all reading except comic books. Many adults feel that when television presents a wide variety of ideas, adventures, stories, it stimulates children to look for books that can tell them even more about the subjects which interest them the most.

Network programmers are very proud of the special

shows they put on for youngsters. Many of these make it possible for you to see things you might never otherwise see, such as the adventures with Jacques Cousteau showing extraordinary underwater scenes, or "The CBS Children's Film Festival," which shows what life is like for children in other countries. There are drama and dance programs and excellent films, all of which are well worth *seeing*.

TIME-WASTING IS THE VIEWER'S PROBLEM

One adult put it this way: "The biggest current problem with television in our country is that the average viewer is watching six hours of it per day. . . . Americans have lost touch with one another. . . . They have lost the sense that they matter as individuals."

Sounds like some old-fashioned do-gooder who doesn't enjoy television, never watches it and doesn't want anyone else to watch it either—right? WRONG! That was the voice of Norman Lear, as he testified before Congress about family viewing habits. Mr. Lear is the creator of programs such as "Maude," "All in the Family," "The Jeffersons," and "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman." He would hardly be the one to have you stop watching television altogether. What he does ask is that you be *selective* in your viewing. He is calling for you to enjoy life by being active rather than always watching others being active for you.

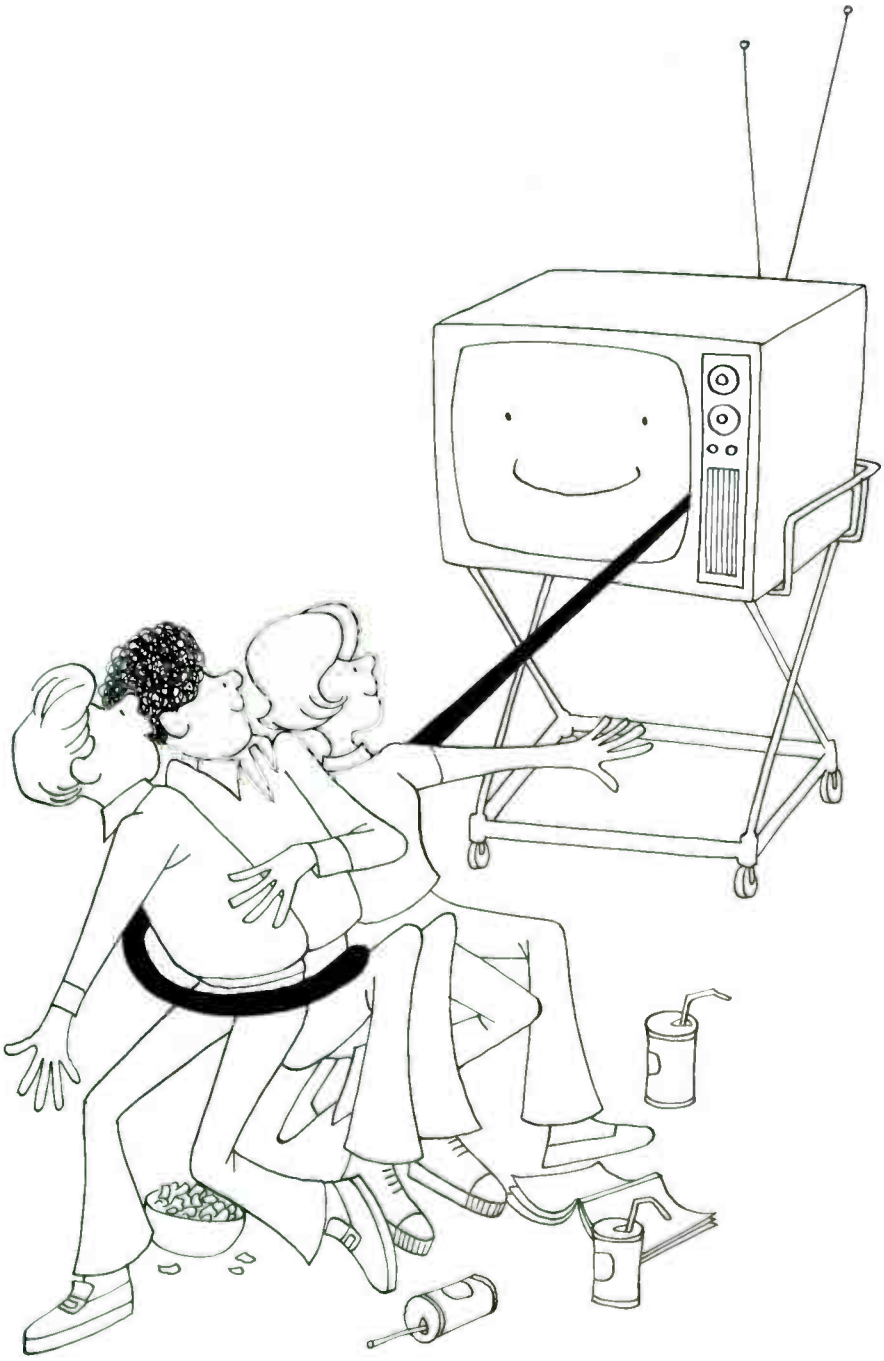
Everyone seems to agree about this one issue: watching television should be mixed with other activities. However, many people claim that this question of a "balanced diet" for living is not up to the television set; it is up to you to make your own choices.

Every new invention brings with it wonderful new possibilities as well as all kinds of new (and usually unexpected)

problems. It is unlikely that when Henry Ford invented the Model A automobile he ever imagined a six-lane highway from New York to California. He could never have imagined the number of people who would be in traffic accidents each year. The simple truth is that if people invent things, they have to learn how to use them.

Perhaps the biggest problem with television is that you watch it so much you don't even think about it—you just sort of take it for granted. Maybe "What you don't know about television *can* hurt you." But with so many different questions and answers, how can you know whom to believe? Well, for starters, maybe it would help if you knew more about television. If you understood why television is the way it is, maybe you could begin to come to some of your own conclusions.

Television can be amazingly effective. Producers and directors know how to hold your attention for long periods of time and that takes knowing a great deal about you and the rest of the audience. To understand just how they do it, let's go behind the scenes to learn the trade secrets that are designed to keep you a constant and loyal audience. We want to do this because either television can use you, or you can use television for your own best needs and interest. We think that the right way is for this incredible television machine to work for an even more incredible machine—*you*.



Don't Move. . . . You're Surrounded

Did your mother or father ever say to you, "Now listen here; you watch television tonight, or there'll be no allowance for you this week!" Can you imagine your parents pleading with you, "Please, watch just one more show. Just one! Please!"

That does not happen in any home that we are familiar with. For the most part you watch and continue to watch because the programming people use special methods to keep you interested.

THE TRICKS OF THE TRADE

These "tricks" are not very different from what a good teacher might do to attract and hold your attention. For that matter you may have been using these methods yourself without knowing it. For example, if you walk into a roomful of friends and say, "Hi, what's new?" it is unlikely that anyone would pay much attention. But suppose you walked in and said, "Hey! Do you know what just happened?" Chances are every head in the room would turn to you with comments such as, "No, what?"

You would have used what is the usual opener in most television shows, the *teaser*. Just think back to practically every comedy program you've seen recently.

> *Comedy show teaser:* (Mother comes home, sits down, paying no attention to the rest of the family.) Father asks, "Did you meet an old boyfriend?" (No reply from Mother.) Older brother (cute, wavy brown hair) says, "Nah, she's meditating." Younger sister (cute, straight blonde hair): "No, dummy, she's not standing on her head." Father: "Okay, dear, you've got our attention. What's up?" (Mother hands Father an envelope.) Father: "Now that's a familiar handwriting. (LOOKS UP IN HORROR) Oh, no, what have I done to deserve this?" Brother: "You two haven't looked like that since Aunt Freda's last visit." (Mother and Father groan.) Brother: "Oh, no! Not this time of year, there are too many of my friends around!" Sister: "Who's Aunt Freda?" Brother: "You're too young to remember. She's a veterinarian who comes every seven years or so and each time with her favorite animal." Sister: "Oh, I remember. She once brought a cat." Brother: "Correction, that was a baby mountain lion. Three neighbors moved out." Mother: "Then there was the year of the rattlesnake." Brother: "Uh, did she say what she's coming with this year?" Father: "She says it's a surprise!" Sister: "Well, there goes the neighborhood!"

This all happens before the title of the show appears and even before the first commercial. If you have watched up to now, it's not likely you will change the channel before find-

ing out what Aunt Freda is bringing this time. You will wait through the opening credits, which tell you the name of the show, the stars, the writers, producer and director, and the opening commercial. Just in case you might be tempted to see what is happening elsewhere, the credits are created to keep the fun going, often using animation. And the commercial does not turn you off; it has been called the best-produced little show on television. Before you know it, it's time for Act One.

A dramatic program uses the same kind of teaser for the very same reason: don't touch that dial!

> *Dramatic teaser:* (a sixteen-year-old girl skiing down a glistening hill. She skids to a stop beside her twelve-year-old brother. He is wearing skis, but he is obviously a beginner from the way he moves.) She: "How'd you like that move between the trees?" He: "Great. You're really good." She: "Nothing to it. Want to try?" He: "No, Mom said to wait until the instructor came back with her." She: "Afraid?" (Close-up of the boy's face; he is terrified.) She: "Well . . ." He: "Will you go with me?" She: "Right beside you. Okay?" He: "Uh, okay." She: "Then GO!"

As they start to move, we see the opening titles and commercial. It would not be easy to leave that scene either. In both instances, there is suspense; what will Aunt Freda bring and what will happen to that boy on the dangerous slopes? We're hooked! But the suspense does not stop here.

After the teaser we know something exciting is going to happen; but we don't know exactly what. To keep you

interested, a television writer ends every act with a "climax." For example, in the first act of a science-fiction drama this is what might happen:

> The captain of a spaceship suspects there is alien life on board. His crew is beginning to act strangely. His loyal assistant actually starts to attack him and the captain knocks him out with a harmless laser beam. In the control tower, the navigator finds that he cannot adjust his computers, the ship is out of control! He looks at the video scanner; there is an object directly in the path of the spaceship. He sounds a general alarm, screams for the captain. But the object with an unusual shape and glowing colors comes closer and closer. . . . (End of Act One; start commercial)

It would be difficult not to want to see Act Two. Your curiosity has been aroused and you wonder what will happen next. The climax is designed to keep you watching, so that you will stay for the next commercial and the next act.

It's hard to believe; but each act in a television show takes just seven minutes, from start to finish. In real life, that science-fiction scene would probably take about seven hours, not seven minutes. But television writers have to play with time, leaving out anything that does not add to the action. A motion picture in a theater may take anywhere from ninety minutes to three hours. A stage play usually takes about two and a half hours. But most television programs tell their stories in about twenty-two minutes! That is why the writers and producers invent artificial climaxes. We say "artificial" because it isn't real, it is forced by the time limit.

And so it goes through every act. But what about the last act? In our example of the space program, the alien force has been caught and thrown out of the spaceship and everyone on the spacecraft is relaxed and ready for new adventures. Now you can get up and eat a piece of fruit.

But wait—you hear the announcer's voice saying, "Stay tuned for exciting scenes from next week's adventure of 'Space Trek'!" You can't miss that. Those are the scenes that take the best action (sometimes the only action) of a drama and put them together in a fast-moving jumble, ending with our hero or heroine in jeopardy. Jeopardy is a much-favored word in television. As long as someone is in trouble, the audience will find it hard to leave.

Surely at the end of the entire program, after the scenes of next week (called the trailer), and all the commercials, and nothing but more credits left to see, there's time to go to the bathroom. Hold it! Our announcer friend is back. "Jerry Lewis joins Bill Cosby and Lucille Ball on the Bob Hope show *next* on the XYZ Network." You may not be a fan of Bob Hope, but on the other hand Jerry Lewis may be worth staying up an extra half hour past your bedtime. If you're lucky, there will be a dull comedy act before Jerry Lewis, and you can get to the bathroom.

By now you can see that at almost every moment there is an attempt by the station and by the programs themselves to make it worth your while to stay tuned as long as possible without moving your dial. Of course, not every show is successful at keeping your interest. Sometimes writers run out of "gimmicks" to attract you. So you move to another channel, where the same attempt to keep you interested goes on.

The next time you watch television, try to guess when

you think an act will end. See if there is a pause or a "fade to black" before a commercial or if the commercial pops right on. Sometimes it's difficult to tell when the program ends and the commercial begins. On children's programs there is a "bumper" that all networks and some local stations put on between the content of the program and the commercial. It may be a slide with the name of the show or a five-or-ten-second animation. Watch for that too.

Perhaps by being aware of all these "tricks" you may find it easier to control your viewing for your own purposes. Getting that piece of fruit and, of course, going to the bathroom may be just as necessary as seeing if our hero wins again (just as you knew he would all the time). You may even figure out that there are too many of the same programs on the air doing exactly the same things, and you may want to turn the set off until something special comes along.

Have some fun with your parents by inviting them to join in the viewing. Show them the teaser, the climaxes, the bumpers, the trailers and the stay-tuneds. Who knows, you also may be helping them to make TV-viewing a special event rather than just a habit.

YOU TOO CAN CREATE A COMMERCIAL

We said earlier that some commercials are called the best little shows in television. There is a good reason for that. The sponsors spend huge amounts of money to create them. Some of the best writers, directors, producers and performers help to create television advertisements (often called spots). What's more, there is a great deal of money spent on research to find out what will make people buy.

Some research organizations actually invite children to come to a special studio which has scenery that looks like a

supermarket. The children are given shopping carts and are asked to go down the aisles picking out what they like from the shelves. The children have lots of fun since, for once, parents are not around to stop them from getting all the cookies and cereals they want. Research people watch this supermarket game very closely. They notice what kinds of colors children like most, what kinds of designs on packages seem to attract them fastest, what kinds of names the shoppers like to repeat.

Television commercials have very little time to sell a product. Many commercials today are thirty seconds long. You may see four different thirty-second commercials right in a row, so the commercial has to make you remember the product even though you see at least four in two minutes!

Commercial writers call upon our old friend "the teaser" to attract your attention right from the beginning. There may be a giant puppet that jumps on the screen. There may be familiar monster faces such as Dracula and Frankenstein that are seen in spooky places. A magician may make an elephant disappear, only to have a package of gum reappear. There may be a funny song with funny words that are easy to remember, all sung by a clown.

So we have puppets, monsters, magic, funny songs and clowns. It is not strange that these are things you like to see. They appear in circuses, ice shows, movies—all the events you like. Sponsors know that these things will attract you and hold you long enough to see and, hopefully, remember what it is they are selling.

Pay close attention to the next few commercials you see. If they are on children's programs, you may see children as part of the commercial. Toy commercials show children having a wonderful time playing with cars and planes and

games. There used to be a time when toy commercials made the toys look as if they did things they really couldn't do, such as move or fly without your help. After many complaints that children were being tricked, advertisers and programmers began showing toys as they really are. The children still look as if they are having fun (and they may be), but we see them pushing the cars along and lifting the planes with their own hands.

There are other restrictions on what you can and cannot see in a commercial on a children's program. For example, you no longer see a bowl of cereal and milk as a full breakfast. You will see a glass of juice, bacon and eggs and toast as part of a "complete breakfast."

Nor will you see your favorite stars, whether it's an animated star such as Bugs Bunny or a live star such as Captain Kangaroo, selling you products on the show which they host. That is a big change in television. Many years ago you would see a famous star appearing in a children's show. That same star would then try to sell you toothpaste or cereal or candy or toys.

That kind of selling does not take place any longer on most television directed toward young viewers. In fact, you will not see that star selling you a product on a spot right before or after the program either. But that does not prevent a favorite host, someone you like and trust, from doing commercials at different times of the day or night. The restriction is on doing commercials on or near the program which the star hosts.

You will probably not hear such things as, "Go out and buy that Bouncy Boy Pogo Stick *today*!" You are not supposed to hear someone say, "If you don't get this new four-color ball-point pen, you won't be popular with your

friends!" Commercials like these brought too many complaints from parents and special groups made up of teachers, lawyers, doctors and psychologists. They said that children were being upset by these messages. When the public complains, and when that same public says it will not buy products, most sponsors and television producers listen.

Some commercials will show you a very good athlete using special equipment, which may make you want to buy the same football or baseball glove or tennis racket. Remember, commercials are not supposed to claim that you will be as good as Jimmy Connors or O. J. Simpson or Muhammad Ali. Other commercials will sell you a cola by having hundreds of people singing a catchy tune on top of a mountain. Still other products use a person you can identify with or a cute animal to help you remember the product. Some use giveaways, either in cereal boxes or at the store where you buy the product. Another restriction: no giveaway, often called a premium, may be advertised on a commercial for more than ten seconds. The commercial is supposed to be about how good a product is, not about the "free" item that will make you want to buy something just to get the giveaway.

Advertising agencies know what you are worried about. They know you like to be popular with your friends. They know you want good grades in school (example: "A good breakfast helps you get a good start in school, so start your day with Supercereal!").

They also know you are attracted to monsters, whether it's the Cookie Monster or famous monsters such as King Kong, Dracula and other favorites. Therefore, they will start a commercial with a mystery scene—a door creaks open, there is lightning and thunder, and suddenly there's

that familiar monster face telling you about that new toy that is shaped like a creature from a mad scientist's laboratory. You put it together and it moves by itself! Batteries not included, of course.

There have been many attempts to stop commercials from using the term "only" or "just" about prices. "This three-speed toy lawn mower is *only* $24.95." When they use the word *only,* it makes it seem as if this is very little money. But it is a great deal of money for some people. This kind of commercial pressure may make you and your parents unnecessarily unhappy.

The final part of a commercial almost always mentions the name of the product. The idea is that you will go shopping with your parents. Often they will say, "And what kind of cereal would you like?" And you will tell them the name of the cereal you remember the best. That is why sponsors do not usually say, "Go out and buy Brand X today!" They intend to show you their commercial over and over again, with a special song and special characters, so that you will never forget the name of their product. You may not even want a particular kind of cereal, but it is the first name that comes to mind.

Let's try an experiment. We are going to put a commercial together right now. First we have to start with our teaser. We know that there are times when you feel tired and cranky and that you want to be left alone. And too often adults make you do things that you don't want to do. Somewhere in the information lies the beginning of our commercial:

> "This message is for children only!" [If we put this commercial on during the Saturday morning programs,

chances are there are no grownups around anyway, but the words seem to show we are on your side.] Something mysterious is happening to you. Sometimes you feel as if you don't want to do anything. Your eyes feel tired. You don't feel like playing. You just want to sit and be left alone. Trouble is, you're not happy about it. And you want a change. Well, there's an answer waiting for you right outside your door.

But first you have to do something you don't do often. Lift yourself up right now. Walk over to your TV set. Reach out with your index finger to the on-off button and push. Turn the set off! Feel different? That's only the beginning.

Next open the door and walk outside. Smell something strange? Take a deep breath of this wonderful product. It's called Air! Fresh Air! Mmmm, smells great, makes you feel great. And here's the best part: it's absolutely free. Try it the next time you get a chance. Remember the name, Fresh Air!

If we are designing an advertising campaign for Fresh Air, we could also create posters showing a boy and girl about twelve or so having a super time breathing Fresh Air with big grins on their faces. The theme of the whole ad campaign is that when you get involved where Fresh Air is found you are able to enjoy life more. That is a big theme for a little commercial, but it's nice to know it's there!

Now it is time for you to try your own commercial—describe your favorite food, clothes, television show or even your pet.

First get our attention:

> "I just saw a movie that will stay in my mind forever."

I think we would all like to know the name of that movie. After you have us listening, then build it up with suspense. Tell us why this movie touched you so much. Tell us who the stars are; or, if there are none, you could use another technique:

> "Wait until you see the newest star in Hollywood."

Be sure you leave us with the name and where we can see it. Finish with something that will remind us long after the commercial is off the air. Let's say the name of the film is *Tarantula*. As the last shot of your commercial, we would see a spider crawling toward us as the announcer says,

> "Before you go to bed tonight, make sure you're not visited by—Tarantula!"

Scary? Sure, but you'll remember the name.

That's the trick. Trying to make you remember the product is most important. Who doesn't know "It's *not nice* to fool Mother Nature!" We have asked both children and adults what product that line is connected with and we have received many different answers, most of them wrong. But that doesn't mean this commercial didn't work. There are many kinds of "remembering." The fact that the commercial has captured everyone's attention may mean that once you are in the store, you will pick up Chiffon Margarine without even knowing why! Usually though, sponsors try to make you remember their product by having the name repeated over and over again. Sometimes, and many stations will deny this, you will actually hear a commercial *louder* than the program that it is sponsoring.

What we have done in this chapter is to tell you some of the many "trade secrets" in television. But this is only the beginning. There is lots more to learn about television such as: what makes television different from movies and radio? why are there so many commercials and how effective are they? why is it that the best programs all seem to be on at the same time? who controls which programs will go on the air? who pays for them? who are the real "bosses" of television? do you really have any power to make changes in television?

You may feel that knowing "too much" could spoil your enjoyment of television. We don't think so. Quite the reverse may happen—that knowing more of the "inside story" will make television-watching that much more exciting. And what better way to learn than by getting involved yourself. That's what you'll be doing next!

Who Could Ask for Anything More?

Today has been a pretty average, ordinary kind of a day. These are just a few of the things that might have happened to you:

You felt very tired in school this morning because you didn't sleep too well last night; you kept having nightmares you can't even remember. . . .

This afternoon you bought a new pair of sneakers and a mouth wash and some pimple cream. . . .

Later you cancelled a bike trip with some friends because you found out there was going to be a thunderstorm. . . .

For dinner you ate a delicious beef stew from a gourmet recipe your father decided to try out. . . .

You got good and angry when you heard about a government official who made a lot of money in a scandal about nursing homes; your grandfather lives in one and the idea of people cheating old people made you so mad. . . .

Your friend called, all excited because he had just

watched a snake shed its skin! . . .
You felt very sad for a while, thinking about the kids who worry that their parents might be getting a divorce. . . .
You laughed so hard, you ended up rolling on the floor at some really funny people in a soda shop. . . .

All in all, it's been a pretty full day, but did you know that all of these experiences (and other similar everyday events) are related to television? And they all could have happened without your ever leaving your house! These things occur so easily, naturally and frequently that most of us never even think about it.

Television affects the way you think and the way you feel. It provides you with information you need (such as weather predictions) and information that may upset you (such as warning about pimples). It can add zest to your daily life (that beef stew was delicious!) and it can help you to understand yourself and others (as in the ABC Afterschool Special about the girl whose parents were getting a divorce). Television can excite you with the wonders of nature (did you know snakes did things like that?) and inform you about matters grownups and children alike need to be aware of (that official must be punished so that other old people will not suffer). And—well—what Fonzie was up to last night was not to be believed! It feels so good to have a time to forget about everything else (mostly homework!) and just laugh a lot.

What a choice you have! When you turn on a TV set in this country there seems to be something for everyone, including your dog if you count pet commercials! In fact there is very little you could name that has not been shown on television. Sensational, silly or serious, it's all been there.

From floating under water to floating in space . . . from the birth of a butterfly to the birth of a baby . . . from murder to magic to mystery—just turn the dial and you have them all. Could you really ask for anything more?

Well, maybe it is not just the *amount* that counts. Maybe what really matters is how good the programs are and how helpful they are to you. But putting together all those programs isn't that easy.

To find out how it is done, let's try an experiment. You are going to work as the station manager of a television station located in Farout, Ohio. You are going to have the power to put on any programs you want at any time. Before you ask "Where do I begin?" here are a few guidelines that could help you get started:

NETWORK OR LOCAL?

While yours is a local station, you are part of a network "family." Your station is known as an "affiliate" of network CDB. That means that most of the time you will carry programs that come to you from the network in New York. For example, all of the nighttime shows are network shows. They are sent across the entire country and you, as a station manager, have the choice to carry as many or as few as you want. Most likely you'll carry programs such as "All in the Family" or "Happy Days" because they bring you the largest audience. And the network will actually pay your station to carry its programming.

COMMERCIAL OR PUBLIC BROADCASTING?

Let's assume you are managing a commercial station. That means you will try to get money to produce your programs by getting sponsors to buy commercials for each

of your programs. Public Broadcasting stations also need money but they get their money in a different way. They do not carry commercials.

AUDIENCE

The most important part of selling commercial time is convincing sponsors that you can reach the largest possible audience. You hope your audience will include men, women and children, minority groups, religious associations, sports lovers, soap-opera fans (soaps are nowadays called "daytime dramas"), special-interest groups such as students, foreign-language audiences and professional people such as police, firemen, doctors, lawyers and scientists. One reminder: whether young or old, your audiences today are more mature because they are better informed than any group in history.

ON THE AIR

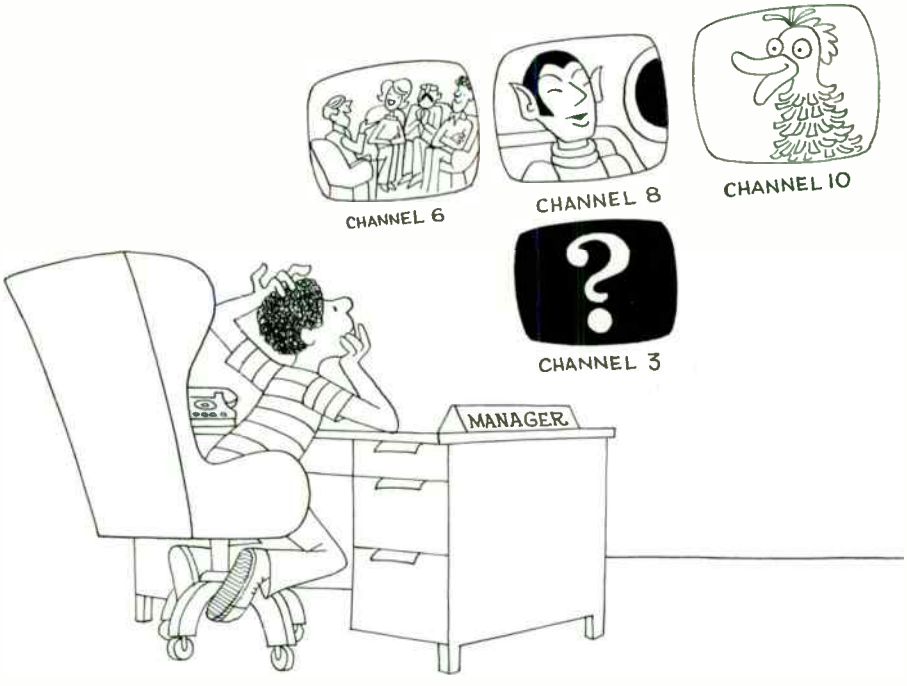
In some parts of the country you could start watching TV at 6:00 A.M. and finish watching at three o'clock the next morning. We will make it easy for you; instead of twenty-one hours of continuous programming, you will *only* have seventeen, from 7:00 A.M. to midnight.

COMPETITION

There are three other stations licensed to broadcast in your area. And all of them are going after the same audience that you are reaching for. Two of these are commercial stations. Channel 6 is an affiliate of network XYZ, which carries some pretty strong prime-time shows in competition with your network, CDB. Channel 8 is an independent station; it is not affiliated with any network. It produces

some of its own programs. It buys old movies and series that have run before on the networks. Programs such as "I Love Lucy," "Star Trek," "Emergency" and other favorites are part of Channel 8's regular lineup. The other station licensed to broadcast in your area is Channel 10, which is a Public Broadcasting station. It runs programs such as "Sesame Street," "The Electric Company," "Zoom" and "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood." For adults it broadcasts plays and ballets and special series such as "Masterpiece Theater" and "Nova." It does not have a large audience but it has a very loyal one. People who watch commercial programs generally switch back and forth between stations. Those who enjoy the programs on Public Broadcasting tend to watch only that channel. (This is true only for adult viewers. Children who like "Sesame Street" will very often watch commercial programs as well.)

Each station has its own "call letters," as well as a channel number. Your station is Channel 3 and your call letters



are WOWY. The *W* part of the call letters is for any station that is east of the Mississippi River. Channels that are west of the Mississippi start with *K*. (One famous exception to that rule is the first radio station, KDKA, located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.)

EARLY-MORNING SHOWS

You are about to make your first move. Your broadcast will actually begin a few minutes before 7:00 A.M. You will send a test pattern on Channel 3. That helps viewers and your engineers adjust their picture for the best possible colors and sound patterns. Then your announcer may tell everyone what station this is (your channel number and call letters) and where you are located. He may also say what special programs to expect in the next few hours.

Remember, it is 7:00 A.M. Parents are getting ready to go to work. Children are getting ready to go to school. Only the preschoolers and whoever stays home to take care of them are going to be available for concentrated viewing.

As station manager, you have a number of choices for your early-morning programming:

News: People are always interested in what's happening. They may not have time to read the newspaper in the morning so they would appreciate some headlines about what has happened since the day before and what could happen today. This could be a half hour of news, sports and weather.

Service show: While many more women are going off to work, the biggest audience that is available for the morning hours is women. They may be interested in

watching a program that talks about new careers for women, or offers cooking tips or gardening ideas or a chance to see celebrities from show business or politics.

Children's program: Preschoolers are usually underfoot while everyone else is getting ready to leave for work or school. It may be greatly appreciated by both kids and adults if they pay attention to the tube. "Captain Kangaroo" is the only network series that appears for children during the early-morning time. Most local stations show cartoon programs for young children. Many of them show cartoons that would no longer be shown on network stations on Saturday mornings because the networks are more open to criticism.

A combined news-service-variety-talk program: This show may have segments on politics, weather, the arts, sports and reviews of new plays and books.

As station manager, which would you choose: news, service, cartoons or variety show? Remember, for the largest available audience Channel 6 carries a program like the "Today" show, which has news and talk and a variety of other items. Channel 8, the independent, carries cartoons. Channel 10 does not have the money to start until 9:00 A.M. (Public Broadcasting stations usually start later and end earlier than commercial stations because it costs less. You cannot have any program on the air, whether it's a talk show or an old movie, without a specific group of engineers and an occasional announcer.) Will you compete with the news-talk show or the cartoons?

Before you make up your mind, there are a few more things to consider. Your network is offering you another news-variety program with new personalities. They will pay you to carry this new program. Not only that, you will be able to do five minutes of local news every half hour. You can sell commercials for the local news and keep all the money. But you are taking a chance. The "Today"-type of program has been around for many years. Would a similar program steal viewers away?

This is the time to consider the potential sponsors who are available in your area. If they are razor manufacturers, chances are a news-talk show may not get as large an audience for their product as, say, a sports program on Saturday afternoon. If they are toy makers, then they are interested in small children. If they are owners of supermarkets, they are interested in women shoppers. Since theirs is a "breakfast" item, cereal producers may be interested in the entire family as its consumers.

Or maybe you can start a brand-new program with local stars. That would mean opening up your studio and hiring producers, directors, writers, engineers, studio supervisors, assistants and secretaries. You have to decide if the money you will get from selling commercials will *more* than pay for the cost of that new program.

Perhaps you make up your mind to go with the network presentation. There is a risk you take no matter what you do and the chances are that you will lose less money if the new network series fails than if you try your own new series and that fails. The network show is the safe way out, but it is not necessarily or always the best approach.

In fact a major television executive, Edwin T. Vane, said recently, "Playing it safe is playing it dumb." Mr. Vane was

talking about ABC-TV's courage in defying network traditions by playing "Roots" for eight consecutive nights. It achieved the largest audience in the history of television.

There are stations throughout the country that have had local programs that are more successful *in their city* than any network presentation or old movie. Usually, these programs have a person who is available to visit the people in that town and he, she or they (some are co-hosts) become part of the area's important activities. The station has created a vital service for the area in which it is located. However, most local stations go the network route. So the day has begun with a tough decision. And there are more to come before you give up your job as station manager of WOWY.

At 8:00 A.M. Channel 8 may pick a program like "Captain Kangaroo." So by eight o'clock we have two news-service-talk shows, one children's show and one channel yet to open. You are fortunate to be in such a small market of stations. In New York and Los Angeles, there are seven VHF channels and a few UHF stations all competing for the same audiences. (A VHF channel means Very High Frequency, those that can be seen between Channel 2 and 13. UHF—Ultra High Frequency—channels are between 14 and 83). The rating services will probably indicate that the largest number of viewers are watching the news-talk shows. They provide more stars, they can cover special events, they can show the President or the Congress at a time when very important bills are being considered. All the news items are presented in small chunks so that the audience will not have time to be bored. And, of course, the reason for the larger audience at that time is there are more adults available than children.

MORNING HOURS

By 9:00 A.M. the educational or Public Broadcasting channel has joined the quest for an audience. It is presenting "Sesame Street," which often has children and parents watching together.

However, according to the television research experts, 9:00 A.M. is female time. Most kids are off to school, most fathers have gone to work, and the people at home are mostly women who do not go to outside jobs, and young children. The network will not be back until ten or eleven-thirty. You have some new choices to make:

Movies: You can go the old-movie route. Some of the more romantic pictures that would not get a large family audience at night are often the choice of a local station during the day. Others go with action films. Still others have chosen to put on horror films, which somehow attract a good-sized audience (and a great deal of criticism from those who know that young children may be watching as well).

Local talk show: A local personality talk show has guests discussing everything from politics to how to help children and gardens grow. There is a substantial audience of women who are ready to watch local programs that seem to help them with their problems.

Kid stuff: Perhaps reruns of "Lassie" or "The Partridge Family" would appeal to the children. Programs such as "Leave It to Beaver" and "Bewitched" ran for many years after they were off the nighttime network schedules.

Other: None of the above. Maybe you could try a brand-new idea.

Again, you're the "boss." It's your choice. But not entirely. While you run the station, there are people you have to account to. Your station may be owned by a newspaper or a corporation that owns lots of stations such as yours. While they are interested in serving the community, they are equally (if not more) interested in profits. Since you are a concerned station manager, you also could be a courageous television programmer. You might broadcast shows you think will satisfy your audience, but meanwhile, be sure you make money!

From 10:00 A.M. through the early afternoon, you will be competing with some game shows, cartoons, reruns of old network favorites and instructional programs (on the Public Broadcasting channel). But before we go on to the afternoon choices you have to make, one special word about what most stations do to try to make sure they will have audiences.

PROMOTIONS

Few stations take the chance that the audience may tune in by some sort of "luck." On your own station and in newspapers and in the weekly television magazines such as *TV Guide*, there are advertisements that will help you find viewers. If there are famous personalities on your program, sometimes just listing those names is enough to insure you a larger audience. If it is an old movie, some local stations tease an audience by giving them a quiz: "Who is the world-famous sports star who became Burt Reynolds's sidekick in *Disaster*, the ten-o'clock movie on Channel 6?" You see a photograph of Reynolds in an action shot with someone

whose face is partially hidden. Usually, there are previews of the movie before and after the previous program.

AFTERNOON HOURS

Remember that your station is a network affiliate. Therefore, you are about to be blessed with a kind of program series that has been popular with audiences for over forty years: soap operas (so called because when they were on radio they were mostly sponsored by companies that manufactured soap products). These programs have been very successful, both on radio and television. "Love of Life" and "Search for Tomorrow" have been on for over a quarter of a century.

Many researchers and psychiatrists have tried to figure out why these programs command such fierce loyalty from the daytime drama fans. One answer is that people's lives are so dull that they enjoy the unusual happenings on a soap. Another is that the viewer shares feelings of loneliness and suffering with the lead characters. Also, the stories never end and that may keep an audience in suspense forever!

That takes care of the adults. But many children watch soaps as well. That means that youngsters are seeing stories about divorce, murder, unmarried pregnancies and emotional problems of all kinds. Why do kids watch a soap opera instead of "Popeye" or "Gilligan's Island"? It could be that children feel that they are sneaking a look at the adult world, like watching their parents' party when they are supposed to be asleep. Or it may be that the dramatic action on these programs is so strong that children find them irresistible, even if they don't always understand what's going on!

If you decide to carry that daytime drama on your station,

your competition will most likely be a game show such as "Hollywood Squares" or "To Tell the Truth," more old movies and more instructional or educational shows on Public Broadcasting. These could include programs that are bilingual (Spanish-and-American-speaking shows such as "Villa Allegre" and "Carrascolendas") or mathematical (such as "Infinity Factory"), or repeats of "Sesame Street" and "Electric Company" and by the end of the afternoon, "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood." Soap operas, a game show, old movies and educational programs will continue throughout the afternoon.

Do you begin to get the idea that there are not many new ideas on television? Did you ever wonder why? We talked before about taking chances. When a "Hollywood Squares" is successful or when "All in the Family" gets a strong rating, most producers try to imitate that success. The same is true on Saturday morning. If a lovable dog such as Scooby Doo brings a large audience of children every week, you may find that soon there are lovable dogs running around all over three networks, sometimes at the same time.

Continuing with our WOWY television scene, the rest of the afternoon could include celebrity-laden variety-talk shows headed by such stars as Dinah Shore, Mike Douglas and Steve Allen.

EARLY EVENING NEWS

It's 6:00 P.M. and the adults are home. Should you give them news again or an action-adventure show such as "Star Trek" or "The Avengers"? If you check your fellow managers, you'll find most of them get a bigger audience with news. And more sponsors are willing to put their commercials in this hour.

Did we say *hour*? Actually, in most places the news continues through until 7:30 P.M. Things may not have changed much from the early-morning news, but most adults feel better when they hear what's happening from people such as Walter Cronkite, John Chancellor, David Brinkley, Harry Reasoner and Barbara Walters. They are all experienced, well-informed and attractive personalities.

Most adults "trust" television more than newspapers, radio or magazines to bring them the "real" news. The same is true for kids. Some young people believe what they hear and see on TV even more than what they hear from their parents, the newspapers, radio and their teachers.

This trust in television news may have something to do with the fact that you can actually see the person in the news. You can see a senator answer a question with a frown or a smile. You see the President explain why he's vetoing a bill that will give money for school lunch programs. No one has to explain what they're saying, you see them say it right to you!

The 7:30 P.M. slot has a special significance. The networks want to control anything that is part of the best audience hours, from 7:00 P.M. to 11:00 P.M. But many producers and local station managers want some of that time to do their own thing as far as programming is concerned. While your station is paid by the network for showing the network program, you might make more money by producing your own shows.

To settle this dispute, the Federal Communications Commission issued what is called "The Prime Access Rule." From 7:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. programs that are different from the usual network-type of series are supposed to be pre-

sented. Jacques Cousteau and other nature-type series are sometimes aired. Experimental dramas and documentaries have been attempted.

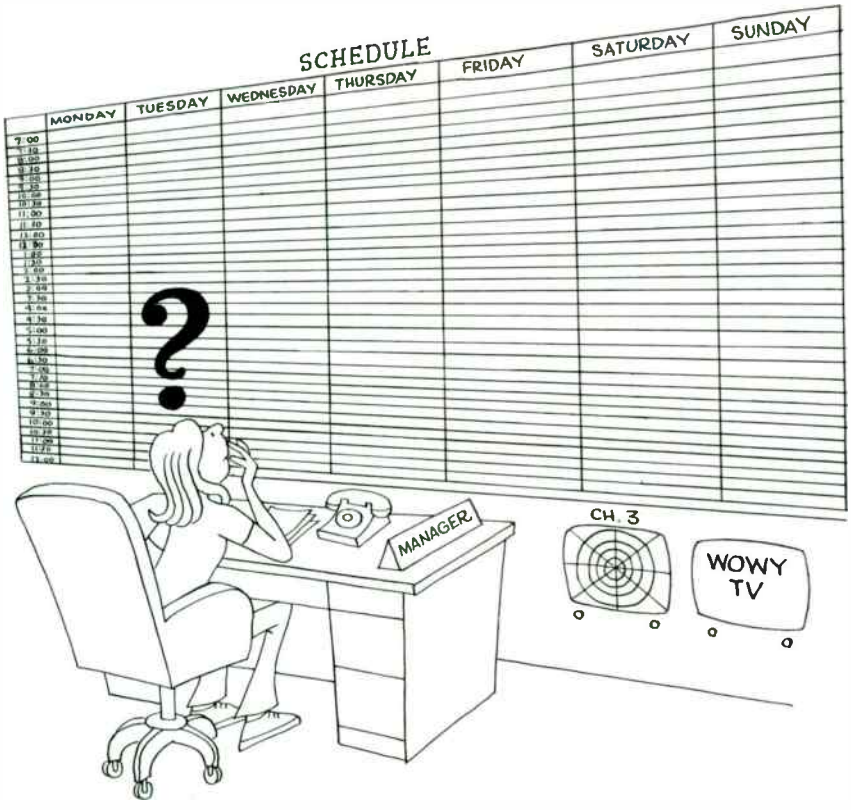
What has occurred, however, is that most stations and producers have played it safe and are turning to the shows that are popular on prime time such as "Hollywood Squares," "Name That Tune" and other game shows. This is made possible because the FCC hasn't enforced the prime access rule.

More recently, there have been attempts to bring in variety programs such as "The Muppets" (of Sesame Street fame) and other personalities such as Andy Williams. You, as a station manager, might want to show children's theater or intriguing documentaries. Your audience may be ready for it.

THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF PRIME TIME

As station manager, you know you are now heading for your biggest audience of the day—prime time, between 8:00 P.M. and 11:00 P.M. This is the time you would want to carry the big network shows such as "The Donny and Marie Show" and "Kojak."

How do you know about the size of the audience? Several ways. For one, when a sponsor puts a commercial on during the morning, he may sell a certain amount of his product. If he tries the same commercial during prime time, he is likely to get many more sales. That's one reason why a sponsor may pay as much as $130,000 per minute for the nighttime "All in the Family," whereas that sponsor would pay from $12,000 to $36,000 per minute on daytime programming and from $8,000 to $30,000 for children's programming on Saturday morning.



The usual way that stations and networks say they know how many people are watching is through "ratings." There are local and national ratings and they take some careful explaining. National ratings involve checking about twelve hundred people all over the country to see what they are watching. From this small sample the networks say they know how many viewers watched, how old they were, whether they stopped watching in the middle of the program and many more facts that networks and sponsors need to know. Those ratings are taken very seriously—seriously enough to push programs off the air a few weeks after they start in September, or to keep them on for five or ten years or longer. We will have more to say about this controversial "grading system" in Chapter 5.

There is another way for programmers to know how large their audience is. One example took place during a profes-

sional football game. It was the last minute of the game, with the Oakland Raiders leading the New York Jets 32–29. Joe Namath faded back to throw a pass. An engineer at the network was looking at the clock. Seven P.M., time to put on a film of *Heidi*. Before Joe could throw, *Heidi* arrived, and soon after so did thousands of calls from throughout the nation. These telephone messages were joined by letters, all of them indicating that they were less than happy with the network decision to interrupt the game. In fact, they were furious! It is the voice of the public that has made all station programmers very careful about forgetting what the viewers want at a particular moment.

At any one moment, there are usually seventy to ninety million viewers available to watch television in this country. About that number watched the first moon landing and years later about the same number watched President Nixon resign. Because it was a very special event, over a hundred million watched the Presidential debates of 1976. In 1977, the highest number ever to watch an entertainment program, eighty million, watched the final night of "Roots," the special "mini-series" about a black man's heritage. With such numbers, you would think there are enough people for all the television stations to share. But it doesn't happen that way. Each station tries to get the largest audience possible by catching the attention away from the other stations.

Most often during prime-time hours you will see programs that seem very much alike, even though they are not scheduled at exactly the same time. If there is a successful detective drama on one network, there may be two other versions of the same detective. For example, the undercover agent is popular these days. Therefore, you will see "Baretta," who wears disguises, "Serpico," who wears disguises,

and "Police Woman," who also wears disguises. If there is a medical show that succeeds, two more of the same kind will follow. Since one of the main purposes of prime-time programming is to sell products, the sponsors feel safer putting their commercials into those series that seem to catch on with the largest audience.

There are times when this works out to the benefit of everyone concerned. For many years, black performers had very few or, at best, small roles on television. Today, the success of shows starring black performers, such as "Good Times," "That's My Mama," "Sanford and Son" and "The Jeffersons," has opened opportunities for other minorities to participate more on television. In those instances, the idea of imitating a popular show had positive results.

Generally, if CBS has a comedy hit such as "Rhoda," ABC may try a variety show such as "Captain and Tenille," while NBC will use a drama series such as "Little House on the Prairie." That's called counter-programming. If there are stations that do not carry the network shows in your town, they may put on a popular talk show with stars such as Steve Allen and Merv Griffin. These two shows are examples of syndicated programs that can be played at any hour, day or night, wherever a station manager thinks they will get him the biggest audience.

While most of the time there is this counter-programming, there have been several memorable moments when the networks put outstanding documentaries or dramatic specials on at exactly the same hour. This kind of seemingly senseless competition usually happens at a particular time of the year, called a black period, when ratings are not counted as an important barometer for advertisers. Since the

three major networks have produced documentaries which are often excellent and even daring, but which would not get strong ratings, the black period is when they unload these specials.

There is one station in most towns that does not seem to try for the greatest number of viewers, and that is the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). Since you have probably seen programs such as "Sesame Street" and "Zoom," you may have noticed one major difference between Public Broadcasting shows and other programs: no commercials.

Yet, in a way, PBS does allow certain kinds of commercials. Each station can take time to ask its viewers to send in money to keep its programming going. Large corporations, such as Mobil or Exxon or Xerox, will provide money for programs without getting a commercial about their products. They do get mentioned at the beginning and end of the programs in the following way: "(SHOW'S NAME) has been made possible by a grant from (CORPORATION)." People who watch those programs are grateful enough to those companies to buy their products. So, in a sense, these "credits" (and the newspaper ads that the companies take to publicize the programs) are respectable, if brief, commercials.

There are some people, many of whom are fans of Public Broadcasting, who are concerned that there are too many hidden commercials in another fund-raising device for noncommercial programming. It is called the annual auction. The major PBS stations in Boston, San Francisco and New York take as much as a full week to have their audiences bid on items that range from sunglasses to uncut diamonds. Some auctioneers describe products with such enthusiasm

that it matches any actor participating in a commercial designed by an advertising agency.

LATE-NIGHT TV

At 11:00 P.M. television becomes a mixed bag. For the most part, the same adults that watched news programs at 7:00 A.M. and at 6:00 P.M. now feel they cannot go to bed until they know the world is safe and, even if it isn't, what the next day's weather will be like. So there are lots of news programs with many interesting personalities to make the day's events seem pleasant enough.

But programmers have learned never to take an audience for granted. Just when most stations felt secure showing news programs at 11:00 P.M., along came "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman." Whether it was because the program was a clever takeoff on soap operas, or because people were getting bored with the news, or because producer Norman Lear put together an excellent cast with funny and, often, outrageous writing, "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman" became a national hit. The point is that the public showed the station managers that it will accept new ideas, especially when they are well done.

Of course, now is the time for all good station managers to get some sleep. Wait just a darn minute! If your fantasy day as station manager happened to be a Friday, you are now ready to begin A Whole New Ball Game!

SATURDAY

A good part of what takes place during the weekends is sports activities. They are the heart of the Saturday and Sunday schedule.

The early-Saturday-morning period is youngster time.

Parents and older children catch up on their sleep, while preschoolers have the set all to themselves. The cartoons are for the younger audience. The simple chases between cat and mouse or the roadrunner and the coyote seem to be enough to keep the little ones staring for a couple of hours.

After that, about 9:00 A.M. or so, you had better prepare for the older groups to take over the set. The young ones will continue to watch, but the control of the tube usually belongs to the older kids. The Saturday morning lineup stretches from the gentle, animated fun of "Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids" and the "Pink Panther" to the live but cartoony characters on such programs as the "Krofft Supershow" and "The Monster Squad" and "Shazam!/Isis."

Most of the afternoon is sports shows. Dad is awake and demands his baseball, football, tennis, golf, stock-car racing and boxing. Most of the audience is male; but research shows that the female audience is growing as more high-priced competition among women in tennis and golf is being televised.

The rest of Saturday you can fill in much like the other part of the week—with news, variety shows, situation comedies and, late at night, rock concerts. Saturday night used to be going-out night but television has changed all that. There are large audiences available for "Starsky and Hutch" and "Carol Burnett" and, of course, "Saturday Night at the Movies." Some teenagers have made television watching part of their weekend dating just so they can see "NBC's Saturday Night."

SUNDAY

Even on Sunday there is no rest for a weary station manager. Sunday morning is not the time for a large audience.

Most people are late sleepers. The early risers may go to church or catch up on their lawn mowing. This is the time that most stations schedule religious programs. These programs come under the heading of "public service," which stations are supposed to supply throughout the week. Public service programs carry no commercials. No commercials means no money. Therefore, you can't afford to spend much for these shows. Some of them, such as CBS's "Lamp Unto My Feet" and NBC's "Eternal Light," have presented fine dramas.

In addition to religious programs, other public service series include the imaginative "Camera Three" and such news programs as "Meet the Press" and its counterparts, "Face the Nation" and "Issues and Answers." *Every* major news personality has appeared on one or all three of these shows at one time or another.

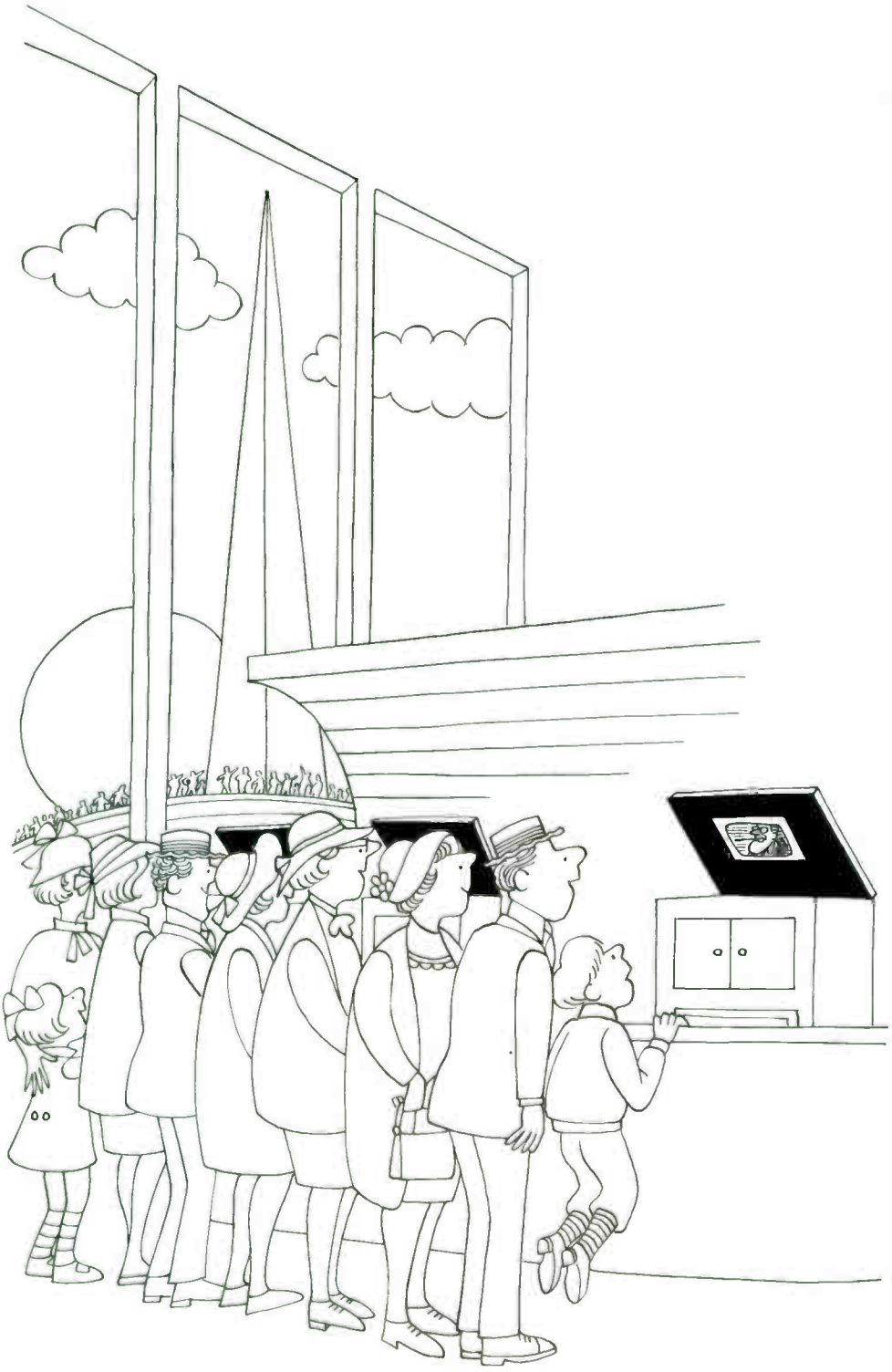
The afternoons and evenings on Sunday are similar to Saturday's schedule. Sports and movies in the afternoon, variety shows and drama series in the evening.

By this time you probably have the idea of what your life would be like as a station manager. There are many opportunities, many traps to fall into, many pleasures, many dangers, but the result could be the most satisfying job you could accomplish; that is, putting this very influential TV machine to work helping your audience rather than wasting their time. It is something to think about, whether you are a station manager or part of the audience.

Well, that's about it, folks; your week is over at last. There's nothing more to do except worry about tomorrow's lineup! The strange part of it is, we are quite sure that we

have *not* discouraged you from considering the possibility of becoming a station manager, and that is the wonderful thing about television. TV may be a headache, but it is never a bore for the people who work "behind the tube."

It never has been boring. From the earliest days of the weirdest makeup and the clumsiest of cameras, television has been an industry of constant change. If you were to enter a time machine and travel back to those first days you would find—but wait; why not join us on a trip back to see how it all began.



Growing Up in TV

By Lee Polk

You would have thought our time machine had taken us to another planet. The buildings looked like the fantasy world of the Emerald City in *The Wizard of Oz*. Inside those strange structures were many examples of what the future would bring: modernistic autos that looked like space capsules, electronic gadgets that would accomplish miracles automatically. But the most intriguing device of all was a five-by-nine-inch mirror that showed moving pictures.

This was not the twenty-first century; the year was 1939. The magic place was the New York World's Fair. The mirror was reflecting the first commercial television pictures broadcast anywhere. The Radio Corporation of America (RCA) had invested millions of dollars to come up with a television system to help sell their new television sets. They were rather expensive (about $625), considering the fact that there was little being broadcast then. I was there on April 30, 1939, when Franklin Roosevelt became the first President ever to be televised.

But I didn't know I was seeing history. Who really likes to listen to speeches, especially when one is young? I was fascinated with the world of the future, but I was just as interested in all the free food I could get from the various exhibits.

My real interest in broadcasting at that time was centered around radio. My imagination could take me anywhere with that box. I would listen to "The Lone Ranger," "The Green Hornet," "The Shadow," "Flash Gordon," "Chandu, the Magician," plus all the sports and soap operas and nighttime adventures and dramas, even while doing my homework. I could picture my own heroes and villains and volcanoes and rainbows and outer-space beings and spooky houses with creaking doors.

You may have noticed that most of the kinds of programs I listened to and, in some instances, the programs themselves, are all part of television today. That is because the same people who helped to create commercial radio took over commercial television. That includes RCA and CBS, Westinghouse, General Electric and other manufacturers of electronic products. But the story of television's growing up is not only the story of these giant corporations; it is the story of people. And I really mean many individuals. Television was not developed by one person or in one country. I found that out in the same way you discover many things: I went to a school—a television school.

A SCHOOL FOR TELEVISION

Today there are television courses given in practically every college throughout the country. High schools have media and communications courses which feature television as an important educational tool. In some schools, there are

even third-grade courses using television equipment. But at the time I went to this school, there were, perhaps, two or three approved institutions for teaching the art and science of this new medium. In fact, the school I went to was called "School of Radio Technique, Television Division." The broadcasting industry was changing rapidly in the 1950s, and many of us who had started in radio knew we had to change with it. Originally I had gone to New York University to take up radio broadcasting. It was still the most popular medium for comedy, news, drama and special events. You may be surprised to know that the television stars of recent years such as Bob Hope, Jack Benny, Frank Sinatra, Jimmy Durante, were all popular radio performers. The country took radio so seriously that Orson Welles could frighten people with a dramatization of H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* in 1938 on CBS Radio. The public was convinced that Martians had invaded New Jersey because the radio had told them it had happened.

It is a normal practice for some people in the broadcasting industry to start working "out of town," that is, outside New York City or Hollywood. I had my first job as a radio continuity writer in Bristol, Tennessee. A continuity writer, when I began, was a nice name for someone who wrote commercials. In my out-of-town small station, commercials could sound like this: "If you buy this attractive aluminum pot today, you will receive the cover to that pot absolutely free!"

After a year and a half of writing for radio, I noticed two things that accelerated my move into television. First, personalities, even more than the new technology, were attracting the public to television. People such as comedian Milton Berle became weekly habits in most television households.

If I walked into a house while the Milton Berle show was on, even if I was a welcome visitor, my greeting would be, "Quiet! Uncle Milty is on."

That was not the only indication that this mysterious piece of furniture was having an impact on the American public. The television listings in newspapers were beginning to grow as large as, and eventually larger, than the radio schedules. I felt I was lucky. I might be able to get into this new field at the beginning, when the possibilities were unlimited. One problem: I knew absolutely nothing about how television worked. I left my writing job and enrolled in that television school.

The technical side of television seemed complicated. Our instructors, many of them new to television themselves, tried to explain the basics of how a picture got from a TV studio to a house. Me: "How does a picture get from a studio to a house?" Instructor: "The camera breaks up the picture it is seeing into electronic signals." Me: "Oh, sure." Instructor: "Then those signals are passed through a cable to a control room where they are amplified." Me (weakly): "Does that mean it gets stronger?" Instructor (ignoring me): "Those signals are passed by wires to a transmitter, where an engineer amplifies them further and sends them into the air by means of a tower."

Since I had the technical know-how of a kindergarten child, the instructor had to take me aside and explain it in this simple way: "When a pebble is thrown into the water, all sorts of circles flow out from where that pebble hit the water." "Good," said I, "then television has something to do with water." "No," said my weary instructor gently, "I just wanted you to have a picture of what picture waves look like. When they leave the tower they go in all directions

until they reach antennas on the tops of houses or apartment buildings. These waves flow down wires into the television set, which converts them back to the pictures that were in the studio. Since these are electrical signals, they travel at the speed of light (186,000 miles a second) and, therefore, you see them almost at the instant they occur, whether it's at a studio, a football stadium or on the way to the moon." I think my instructor was making a joke about that last part; he was not the kind of guy who would envision our reaching the moon less than twenty years later.

While I had to admit that it was miraculous to me how those pictures squeezed into wires and ended up in my living room as good as new, my major interests were in learning how a program was put together. The school gave me the opportunity to run a camera, handle a boom that holds a microphone (which also breaks up sound signals into electrical signals, and here we go again), floor-manage a program (which allowed me to cue the actors into the right cameras and to give time signals) and, eventually, to enter the inner sanctum of the control room. There I could be a video engineer, controlling contrasts and brightness just as you do on your own set today and watching pictures of those video waves on an oscilloscope. Or I might be the audio person, controlling the sound of the actors and the tape recordings. By moving some knobs around, I could actually "mix" the various sounds, including sound effects such as horses' hooves, babies crying, or a plane, or a dog barking, along with the volume of the actors' voices.

At that time I was especially fascinated with two jobs in the control room, those of the technical director and the director. The "T.D." controlled everything that happened as far as pictures were concerned. By moving a lever or

pressing a button, I could switch from one camera to another on a signal or cue from the director. The lever allowed me to "dissolve," that is, blend from one picture to the next, as quickly or slowly as necessary. By pressing the buttons, I was able to switch, or "cut," from one camera to another instantaneously. (Every time you see another angle or another face or another scene, either a cut or a dissolve has taken place.)

From the very beginning, I learned that the boss of the control room is the director. The moment the first picture begins, to the final shot when he says, "Fade to black," the director is responsible for what the public sees. I loved telling the actors what to do, and trying to devise special shots for those big cameras to take. Since we were all students, you can imagine the screams from my classmates when I demanded that a cameraman move his camera from one end of the studio to the other in just seven seconds. Those cameras, by the way, were a far cry from today's electronic marvels. The old camera was balanced on a heavy, clumsy tripod which sat on a dolly. It was as easy to move as a piano. Today's cameras rest on free-floating dollies that a child could be taught to move. In addition, most new cameras have zoom lenses that allow the camera operator to get close-up and wide-angle shots without moving his machine at all. The lenses just zoom in and out at the touch of a button!

There were other differences then. The old cameras needed an enormous amount of light, which poured on the actors, who already had problems with the heavy makeup they had to wear in order to look "normal" on television. Even that was an improvement from the early days when the first television drama was performed in Schenectady, New York, at a General Electric studio (1928). The actors

then had to wear green makeup and purple lipstick! Today's performers can wear minimal makeup as they work under what is called cool light. Some busy actors I know will leave their makeup on when they leave the studios, and the public pays no attention.

THE EARLY DAYS: TAKING RISKS

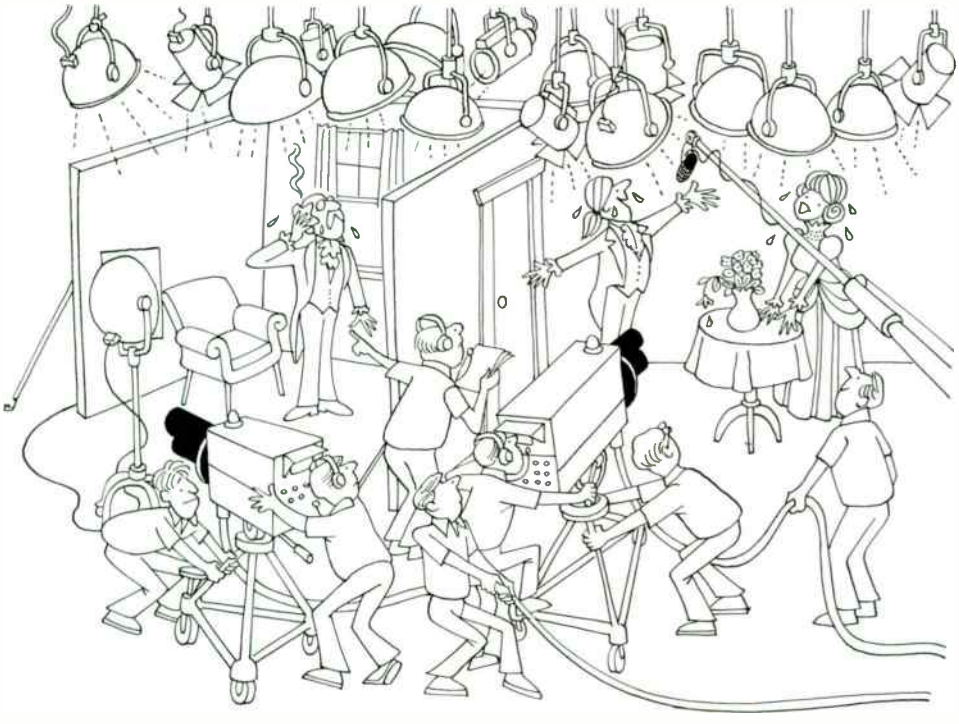
One of the joys of studying at my television school was that I could experiment in programming, lighting, graphics and camera effects that today would be called "risky." But I was ready for anything then: after all I had had a full five months of training! I was ready to take over the networks as a producer, director or at the very least an assistant director.

I settled for a job as a guest-relations "boy" at the Dumont Television Network. There's a good reason you may not have heard of the Dumont Network; it went out of business in 1955. I had the major responsibility of showing people to their seats, handing out tickets for shows ("Would you like to see a very exciting game show, please?"), or showing youngsters how to go to the bathroom without walking in front of cameras. I was fortunate to move rapidly, becoming a director in a year and a half. I still had to tell children where the bathroom was!

Remember, everything was live. There were no videotape machines and, except for movies that were shown during daytime and late night hours, very little film. That meant very careful planning so that each camera could be directed to move from one scene to another while the camera that was "on the air" would cover until the other camera arrived and was ready with its shot. The success or failure of these split-second moves determined whether the audience would be distracted by a camera that was out of focus or the direc-

tor would fall apart because he could not get his camera commands out quickly enough.

There are moments that I remember fondly now as a fragment of those exciting times. For example, after becoming a director, I was assigned a popular detective drama. There was a scene that called for a dissolve from police headquarters where the detective said, "There is someone who knows who killed Larry Schwab. We'd better get to him right away!" Camera #2 had been dispatched to the apartment or, rather, to the set of "the man who knows the killer." The script said that this knowledgeable person had been found by the killer and now had a knife in his back. Camera #2 arrived at the apartment set just in time for the dissolve. But our actor was cued late, so what we saw to our horror and the audience's amusement was a "dead" actor calmly scratching his back! Soon enough he realized the camera was on him, and he appropriately "dropped dead." So did the show.



For when the detective walked in and said, "We're too late. It looks as if he's been dead for hours," even the concerned people in the control room roared with laughter.

Yes, "live" was tricky. There were the pains of the forgotten lines, the scenery that fell down, the guns that didn't fire (one actor said "Bang!" in frustration) and such unusual events as the camera's moving in quickly for a close-up of an actor and actually knocking him over with one of its lenses. There were also the animals on the children's shows who relieved themselves without warning.

But there were also the pleasures of "live." It was a great challenge to direct fine dramas or comedy programs with live audiences and opera shows with a full orchestra. The challenge included completing the program right "on the nose" (on time), having achieved all the artistic qualities the audience demanded of our programs.

At the Dumont Network, we could take chances. There's nothing like being number four in a four-network race for audiences. We could risk working with unknown comedians such as Jackie Gleason and Ernie Kovacs. Kovacs was one of the funniest men who ever lived. He was "Laugh-In" and "Monty Python's Flying Circus" combined. The reason that you probably have not heard of him is that he died too young in a car accident.

Dumont also presented one of the most imaginative children's programs ever made. It was called "The Magic Cottage." It was produced in the early evening, when in those days it was not unusual to have children's programming. Each day of the week I would direct an original story about dozens of characters that ranged from leprechauns to a troll who laughed when he was sad and cried when he was happy. The notion that you could do five worthwhile dramatic pro-

grams a week would not be believed by most producers and station managers today.

Even as a live program, we took chances using many camera tricks and special effects, including magic carpets flying through space and characters on drawing boards coming to life before your eyes. One of the most popular effects was shrinking Pinocchio enough to fit into a bottle. Today all these tricks and effects are done electronically on videotape and film. The challenge today is how to use such inventions as computer animation and multiple-image effects so that they are more than tricks, so that they make sense within the programs.

The more successful networks at that time were experimenting, too, on a grander scale. Programs such as "Studio One," "Playhouse 90," "The U.S. Steel Hour," "Philco Playhouse," "Armstrong Circle Theater" were presenting major dramatic stars, writers, directors and producers, many of whom are now in Hollywood or on the Broadway stage. If you entered a studio where one of these dramas was being produced (again, it was all live), you would often find only three cameras and lots of small sets. The sets would give you the kind of scenic reality that you would actually see in a motion picture. Walking around the studio you would see the following: an apartment (consisting of a couch, a few tables, pictures on a wall and an archway that suggested there was a stairway to many other rooms); a telephone booth, supposedly outside on a busy street; an office (no more than a desk and a telephone and the hint of a filing cabinet); and so on. Sound effects, such as autos honking their horns near that phone booth, and a typewriter clicking away in that office, gave the illusion of more people and more places than actually existed. For one show that I

did in a supposed train station, I had the same actor walk back and forth four times in front of the camera as if there were a huge crowd of people passing our main actress.

EDWARD R. MURROW

Since live was not easy, it took courage and creativity to make television as stimulating as it was in those days in the 1950s when TV was growing up. This was not only true in the dramas for children and grownups; it was also true in the area of news and current events. It so happened that the 1950s were a time of great unrest and fear in the United States. We were fighting a war in Korea at that time. Many people were very frightened by the power of communist countries, and afraid of communists in this country. And, in the middle of a very tense political situation, came some of television's finest moments. I want to tell you about it, because it greatly influenced my feelings about working in television.

In the early 1950s, there was a senator named Joseph McCarthy who developed a way of accusing people of being disloyal to this country without presenting any evidence that they really were.

A senator is an important person in this country. If Senator McCarthy claimed someone was being friendly toward the communists, then that person might be fired from a government job or dishonorably discharged from the armed services or even from a job in private industry. The senator's techniques became so famous that to this day we still call accusing someone of wrongdoing without presenting any evidence "McCarthyism."

Most people in the country were afraid to take on the "junior senator from Wisconsin." There were some in gov-

ernment who fought him, but no one in television dared speak out except Edward R. Murrow, a reporter-commentator at CBS, and his producer, Fred W. Friendly, who later became president of CBS News. These two not only attacked McCarthy for his methods, but they set a standard for television documentaries that has rarely been equalled on television.

Today you probably do not watch many documentaries, usually because most of them are dull. Also, most documentaries do not get good ratings, so they are presented at late hours when you are not available as an audience. There are some magazine-format news programs such as "60 Minutes," but they are not really in the category of hard-hitting or controversial documentaries.

The program that Murrow and Friendly created was part of a series called "See It Now." On March 9, 1954, they presented films of Senator McCarthy talking. There were just a few comments from Murrow himself; the rest of the program was built around McCarthy being himself: snickering when an innocent person tried to protest, walking out when he could not prove his point and, generally, through his own words and actions, showing the public that he was attacking people without any regard for their rights.

Fred Friendly, in his book, *Due to Circumstances Beyond Our Control,* recalls the last statement made by Murrow on the program: "We proclaim ourselves—as indeed we are—the defenders of freedom, what's left of it, but we cannot defend freedom abroad by deserting it at home. The actions of the junior senator from Wisconsin have caused alarm and dismay amongst our allies abroad and given considerable comfort to our enemies, and whose fault is that? Not really his. He didn't create this situation of fear;

he merely exploited it, and rather successfully. . . ." He concluded by quoting from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, "Cassius was right: 'The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars but in ourselves.' Good night and good luck."

Senator McCarthy, of course, attacked Murrow. But it was truly the beginning of his end. He died in disgrace a few years later. Murrow, on the other hand, went on to serve President Kennedy as the Director of the United States Information Agency. He died in 1965, mourned by all who have ever been part of this industry.

I must confess to you that I cried when I saw the McCarthy program. It suggested that there is hope in this country for the freedom of expression and the protection of the rights of our people, and that broadcasting could be a useful force for its citizens. I felt the same way watching the 1974 telecasts of the Presidential impeachment hearings of the House of Representatives.

If I have taken longer to tell you the history of this incident than of any other in television it is because I have a fond hope. I dream of the day when one of you who is reading this book will become the Edward R. Murrow of your generation. It is a gap that broadcasting has not filled to this day.

TELEVISION BEGINS TO LOOK AT ITSELF

As television grew, it became more and more apparent that there would have to be some laws to control the use of television. In almost all other countries, the government controlled all or most of the television stations. In the United States, television developed as a highly competitive industry; and only as time passed did we begin to realize its influence and power over all our citizens.

In 1934, Congress came through with a Communications Act setting up a Federal Communications Commission, responsible ever since for protecting the interests of the general public. Long before that, in 1922, the National Association of Broadcasters was founded by the industry itself to set up regulations. More recently, the public itself has begun to express a deep concern for the right to participate in decisions.

In the late 1960s I was the news director of the Public Broadcasting station in New York, Channel 13. We were always looking for worthwhile news stories and we heard about a new group that was concerned about children's television. A group of four women announced that they were parents and that they were very concerned about the state of television for their youngsters. They were starting a new organization called Action for Children's Television (ACT). No one from the press took the group very seriously. There had been complaints before, but these women were not sponsors or members of Congress or even newspaper critics. So why should anyone pay attention?

Those four leaders now head up an organization with a great deal of influence. What have they accomplished? By 1972, for the first time in broadcasting history, there were vice-presidents and directors in each network assigned to children's programming. That same year, the FCC held hearings (of which I was the moderator), based on a petition from ACT, which brought together all the broadcasters, advertisers, representative station managers and owners, top network executives, performers and producers who were concerned and involved with children's programs.

The results of those hearings led to some of the guidelines that we have referred to previously, such as no more com-

mercials by hosts of children's programs on those programs. Commercial time on Saturday morning was reduced from sixteen minutes to nine and a half minutes per hour. ACT was able to help eliminate sponsorship of vitamins on television and halt the selling of those vitamins by popular comic-book heroes. The reason for stopping such commercials is the danger that children might swallow vitamins as easily as they swallow candy. But ACT has achieved even more. It has opened a permanent dialogue among all the participants in television as to what is best for children in programs and commercials. Each year there is an ACT convention and all the network "biggies" of children's television show up.

WHAT YOUR PARENTS WATCHED

In 1949, there were *no* Saturday morning programs for children. Sunday had some in the early evening, such as the delightful fantasy-storytelling half hour with Paul Tripp called "Mr. I. Magination." There were Westerns and cartoons and "Super Circus." Most children's programs were on five days a week during the afternoon. "Howdy Doody," the popular marionette, was on at 5:30 P.M. on the NBC stations; Dumont had the "Small Fry Club" at 6:00 P.M., "The Magic Cottage" at 6:30 P.M. and the leader of all the television space shows to come, "Captain Video," at 7:00 P.M.

The competition for the "Captain" at that hour was a show on NBC that had started locally in Chicago, in 1947. It was the beginning of one of the greatest family series in all of television, "Kukla, Fran and Ollie," created and performed by a true genius, Burr Tillstrom. Fran is called the only "human" among the Kuklapolitan players. But any-

one who has worked with that group (and I did for five wonderful seasons) knows that Kukla and Ollie and Beulah Witch and all the rest are as real as anyone you would like to know. The test of anything worthwhile is that it lasts for a long time. "Kukla, Fran and Ollie" spent their 1975–76 season (thirty years later!) with a weekly half-hour series, while continuing for their eighth year as hosts of the CBS Children's Film Festival.

There aren't too many long-distance runners in children's television. Fortunately there is one who has become a spokesman for better children's programs especially in the commercial world. "Captain Kangaroo," Bob Keeshan, has been around for over twenty years and over six thousand shows. He and "The Mickey Mouse Club" started in 1955. Walt Disney's "Mouse" ran out of steam but attempted a comeback during the 1976–77 season. But the "Captain" goes right on. He left Saturday mornings to become a regular at 8:00 A.M. weekdays.

AND WHAT CAME NEXT

It is the preschool world that seems to have brought out the best in television. In November of 1969, a new children's series exploded onto the television scene. We were transported to a place called "Sesame Street," which housed a group of Jim Henson's Muppets—Big Bird, Oscar the Grouch, Bert and Ernie, the Cookie Monster and Grover—and a live cast of pleasant and talented actors. "Sesame Street" was supposed to be an educational program on Public Broadcasting teaching little ones the numbers and the alphabet. But the Children's Television Workshop, a gifted group of producers, writers and directors who produced the series, used proven entertainment techniques

from commercial television to make each program a fun experience as well as a learning one.

There are many educators and psychologists who still argue about whether the methods used by "Sesame Street" worked for its audience, but everyone agrees that the series did have a major influence on helping Public Broadcasting get the attention and the money it needed to stay alive. While there are no direct imitations of that series on commercial television (one reason is that it cost eight million dollars to produce the first hundred and thirty half-hour "Sesame Street" programs), some producers say that it did inspire entertaining and educational programs such as "Schoolhouse Rock," which is seen in three-minute segments Saturday and Sunday mornings on ABC. By the way, "Sesame Street" producers kept their show from competing with "Captain Kangaroo" by insisting that their series run at 9:00 A.M., so that preschool children could have both programs for their pleasure and learning. "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood," created by Fred Rogers, one of the most beloved performers among little ones, is another of the bonuses of Public Broadcasting.

At those ACT hearings in 1972, there were questions as to why Fred Rogers and Captain Kangaroo could not be shown on Saturday morning. (In many areas throughout the country, "Sesame Street," "The Electric Company," "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" and "Zoom" are shown on Saturday throughout the day; but not on a network basis.) The answer which network programmers give is that such programs would not succeed against favorites such as "Bugs Bunny" and "Scooby Doo." Supposedly, the so-called "soft" programs such as "Sesame Street" can't compete in the ratings game with programs that feature superheroes or fan-

tasy situations such as people coming out of the center of the earth, or computer robots who are lost in space, or teenagers shrinking down to miniature size and being chased by a mad scientist, or talking cars and dogs and pink panthers. "It is just a little larger than life," say the research experts who work for the commercial networks. But what has happened is that in many instances animated programs have been replaced by "live action" series that use people, animals and cars as if they are animated. Cars and animals talk, people fly, dinosaurs and other creatures appear everywhere. Very little that is "live" looks like anything that approaches reality.

Occasionally there are some network series that break the rules about being "soft" and getting the ratings. One of them is CBS's "Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids" starring Bill Cosby. If you watch this group of personalities (they are animated, Cosby appears live), you might learn how some children express their feelings about such human things as not wanting to go to the dentist or being afraid to wear glasses because the kids will make fun or being too small to play baseball even if you are good. Sounds preachy, doesn't it? The show is not. It is full of gentle humor and the kind of action that children are familiar with. And there are enough different children in the show for each youngster in the audience to identify with. This series has had a long run because it has survived the competition of the more standard Saturday morning programming.

Another question persists: why are there no daily series for children on in the weekday afternoons? Couldn't you have "hard" programming for them during those hours instead of always on Saturday mornings? The answer is that from the beginning, commercial television has been a market-

place that sells goods and, only secondarily, serves the public. Sponsors discovered that they could have their cake and sell it too by programming quiz and game shows, daytime dramas and old movies in the afternoons, getting adults *and* children to be possible consumers of their products. The children do not mind, they say. And Saturday morning is for young ones when adults are not around to bother them. Isn't everyone happy?

The FCC isn't. ACT isn't. Many parents aren't. And children might not be if they learned what they *could* have. And they may have a chance to find out. There is still talk among the networks about creating a "children's hour" in the afternoon. Right now NBC and ABC present "Special Treats" and "Afterschool Specials" in the afternoons every two weeks or so. Almost half of the audience for those specials are adults, most watching with their children. Therefore, say some children's program partisans, afternoon series for children might be just as rewarding for sponsors as the current game and movie presentations are now.

TELEVISION AROUND THE WORLD

Television is an important part of the way of life throughout the world. When Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, an estimated forty-seven countries watched with an audience of over seven hundred twenty million! American programs are extremely popular in other countries, especially Great Britain, Japan, Germany, the Scandinavian countries, Canada, Australia, African countries and Latin American nations. You would expect "I Love Lucy" to be loved everywhere and it is. Lucy is seen in Chinese, Spanish, French and German. The biggest seller is "Bonanza," which reaches eighty-two countries and four hundred million people. I

have actually seen the Cartwrights speaking Japanese! (That process is called dubbing, which means that you make the lip movements of someone speaking one language synchronize with the language of another country.)

Children's programs in foreign countries do not have the same schedules we have. There are afternoon children's programs in practically every country. In England, for example, between the hours of five and seven you will find storytelling, dramas, variety programs and news shows. All are very popular with British children. In fact you will find some programs which feature popular American performers such as the versatile ventriloquist-actress Shari Lewis.

Often there are programs that invite you to use your imagination. Monica Sims, head of children's programming for the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation), has said:

"We are not interested in providing moving wallpaper (for children to be kept quiet) . . . we do all we can to stimulate thought and action." The BBC broadcasts all sorts of stimulating programs for children from the young "Watch with Mother" and "Playschool" (a gentle and effective preschool show that is imitated all over Europe) to "Jackanory" (a storytelling show with top actors and actresses) and the extremely popular "Blue Peter" (a "variety" show with three warm and marvelous hosts who go everywhere and do everything from washing windows on skyscrapers to climbing near volcanoes just as they are about to erupt). When Valerie, John and Peter have a "Blue Peter" contest they get as many as half a million entries.

On one of their programs, Valerie went to visit a charming old lady in her flat in a poor section of London. They talked for quite a while about all kinds of things—many having to do with what it was like to be old and crippled. One of the questions was, "Don't you ever get out of the house—don't you go to see your old friends?" The old woman replied, "Well, no, because of my leg. I can't climb stairs, you see, and I'm mostly in this wheelchair. There has been talk of building buses with ramps to take us about, but I guess there's not enough money for that."

After some investigation it was discovered that copper wire and spools and a few other kinds of scrap materials were much needed, and could be sold for enough money to provide some of these special buses. The hosts of "Blue Peter" asked their audience if they could collect some of these materials in order to buy one bus. Hundreds of thousands of children helped—and enough material arrived to buy *four* buses. That kind of direct participation is unknown in the United States.

But there are several important differences that you should know about between American children's television and television overseas.

Most programming overseas is noncommercial because most countries run television as part of the government. Most countries charge license fees for television sets, higher for color than for black and white sets. The BBC operates entirely on that money; it does not get any government money. There are commercials in England now under the Independent Television Authority. Germany and Japan have commercials, as does Italy. (That latter country likes to put a half-hour block of commercials on at one time and the audience loves it.)

Unlike the United States, most countries produce their own programs. In this country, networks do not produce shows, they "rent" them from independent producers. Therefore, Norman Lear's company, Tandem Productions, owns "All in the Family" and "Maude" and "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman." Most local stations in the U.S. produce some of their own programs, but they, too, are happy to carry productions made by outside packagers (another name for producers who put the entire "package" together). The BBC has as many as sixty people working on children's programs. In contrast, at ABC I was part of a team of five executives responsible for finding the outside people to create children's shows.

While there may be many channels (Germany has nine separate networks in different parts of that country) the competition is not as strong as it is in America. Therefore, there are periods when there is nothing on television. That is not permitted in the United States. The theory is that there are always different audiences available for all parts

of the day and night, and that they all have a right to have television. But some American programmers say that the more hours there are that must be filled, the less chance for a great deal of quality programming.

There is a style of programming in European countries that is quite different from our own. The BBC, which is the mother of "Monty Python's Flying Circus," also has a children's program that is almost as zany. It actually started as a service to deaf children. It is called "Vision On" and everything in it is supposed to be based on something visual. There are many animated sequences and a lot of stop-action photography (a technique by which you film something one frame at a time instead of continuously). The result is a very funny motion that makes some impossible things happen. For example, a man sits down on the ground. He puts an imaginary key in an imaginary ignition. He turns it and we hear the sound of a motor. He places his hands on an imaginary wheel and, suddenly, you see him moving along the road as if he is in a car. Many American commercials use stop-action gimmicks to create their magic effects. "Vision On" can be seen in many parts of the United States now.

In Italy, the RAI (which is the governmental agency for television) has created dramatic programs for children and a variety of comedy shows. One special series lasts only about thirty seconds at a time. For example, you would see a great many children playing games. Suddenly they "freeze." There is a dissolve to a famous painting of the same action, while the announcer says, "*The Children's Games* by Pieter Breughel." That's all. It comes between shows and is a great way to learn about paintings.

Usually these thirty-second spots are very funny. One

might show the famous Mona Lisa come into a painter's studio. She looks around for a place to sit. She doesn't notice that there is a palette filled with paint on a stool. She sits down—and she gives her mysterious "smile." Again, the announcer would say, as the picture dissolves to the actual painting, "*Mona Lisa* by Leonardo Da Vinci." Would you ever forget it?

Many of the things children are concerned about are treated with more openness in other lands. I have seen the actual birth of a baby done in Sweden. This was designed for fifth-grade students. In certain Scandinavian countries where the divorce rate is extremely high, the problems and adjustments of living with one parent are of great interest to children. There are also many dramatic programs during the children's viewing hours that are presented about that subject. An equal number of programs are produced for school television viewing.

There is much more to be learned from the comparisons between American and foreign television. Our cultures are different, but children are the same all over the world. We have imported many programs, especially from England. Maybe our future will have greater ties to international television than it has in the past. Satellite viewing will make this world smaller than it ever has been.

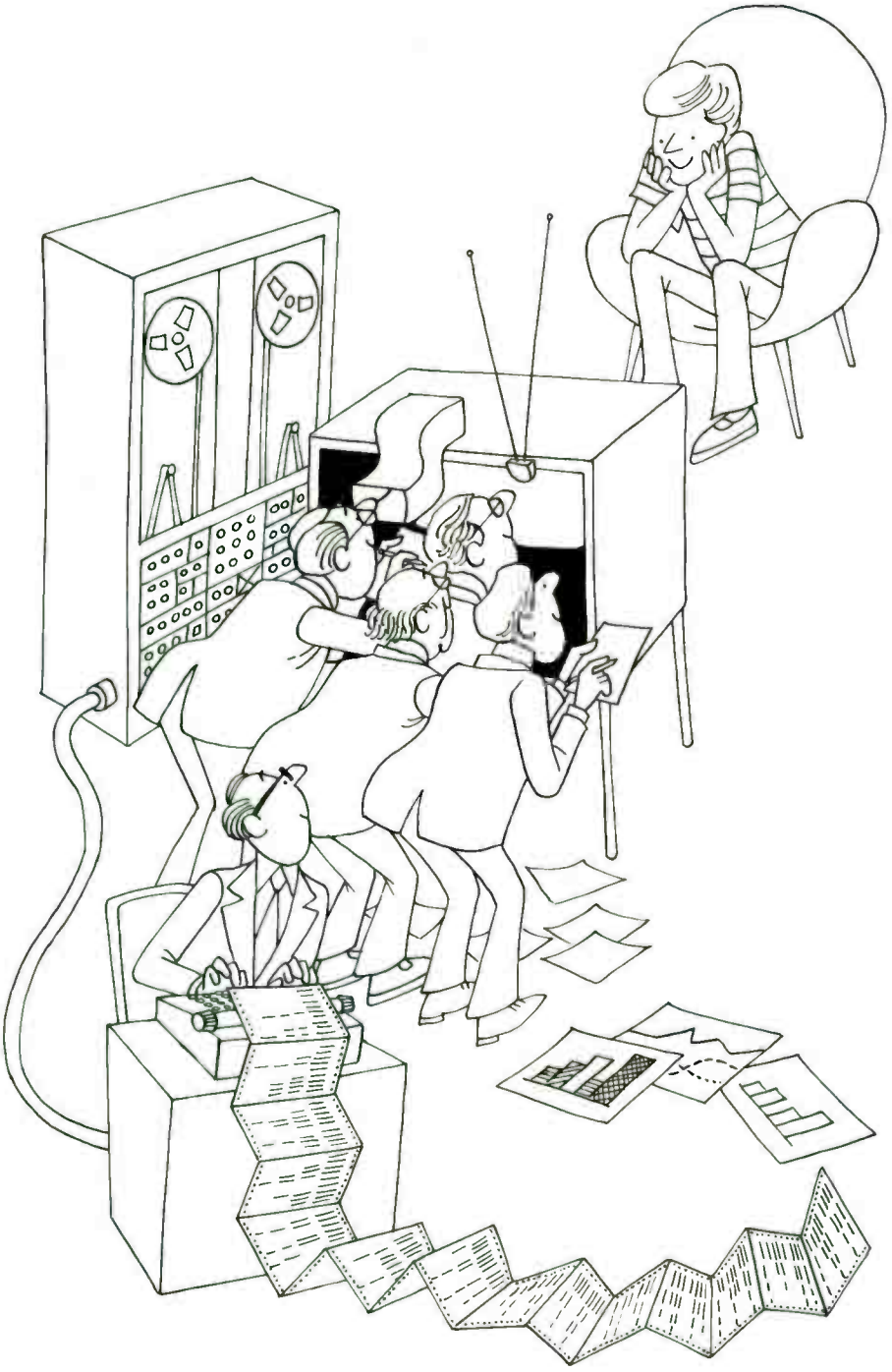
WRAP-UP

To me the luckiest people in the world are those who can work at what they love best. It has been my good fortune to have produced, directed and/or written the kinds of programs that I truly enjoyed doing. I have had the opportunity to work with talented and interesting people and learned so much from them that to tell the truth, I cannot

separate my "work" from my "life." That is a good feeling.

Since I was introduced to that "box" way back in 1939, both television and I have changed a lot. In fact I think we have worked on each other a bit. I am still overwhelmed with its magnificent color and the World Series and the moon and Mars telecasts and the conventions and the live performances of Beverly Sills with a full orchestra and the Afterschool Specials, which reach out to the hearts and minds of children.

I have tried to influence television "from the inside." I have tried to make programs that do more than pass the time of day, especially for youngsters. What concerns me most are programs that entertain, inform and help young people to feel good about themselves. Some of these programs can even suggest that the audience turn the set off and go out and experience the sights and events they are viewing! Whenever that happens I feel that I and that "box" I bumped into in 1939 have succeeded beyond our dreams.



We'll Be Back in a Minute, but First This Message . . .

From Eda LeShan (and Friend)

It was my idea to ask Lee Polk to tell us about his experiences growing up in television. I thought I was being very clever; that way I wouldn't have to listen to a long, boring history lesson about TV. I'm afraid the joke was on me. Now I seem to have so many new questions to ask that I hope you won't mind if I interrupt this book to try to get Lee Polk to give me some more answers.

THE BIRTH OF "THE BOX"

Eda LeShan: I remember that "little box" at the World's Fair. Could you tell me how it got invented? Don't tell me too much—I get confused by too many scientific facts. Tell me about the most important people and what they did.

Lee Polk: I would really like to give you a fast answer, but there were dozens of people from many countries who helped to develop what we now know as television.

One of the first people to get involved was Guglielmo Marconi. Marconi perfected the wireless transmitter which paved the way for sending of sound and, later, pictures through the air. When he got his first wireless patent, Marconi was in his early twenties. He had to go through many adventures before his invention was finally accepted. First, the Italian government refused to give him the money to develop what came to be known as Marconi's "little black box." He then went to England for help. When he arrived, the customs inspectors, remembering that there had been some assassination attempts by Italian radicals in other countries, decided that the black box was dangerous. They hammered it to pieces.

Marconi went on to rebuild his box and set up a company. He later came to America, where he went into business with a wireless operator named David Sarnoff. It was Sarnoff who was the founder of the Radio Corporation of America, the company which today is the largest owner of television patents and the parent company of the National Broadcasting Company (NBC). Largest of all television organizations, it is still called the *Radio* Corporation of America as if to remind us where it all began.

A very young man with a unique name, Philo T. Farnsworth, was another television pioneer. When Farnsworth was sixteen years old, his science teacher was astounded to find that his young student had worked out theories about the use of sound waves. Farnsworth went on to develop "the image dissector," which was a more efficient type of television camera tube. RCA tried to buy out young Philo. He eventually

won his fight to retain the rights to his inventions and to lease (rent) his ideas to the giant corporation. For the most part, RCA and, later, the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), which was founded by William Paley, have been the major sponsors of television research and developments. In 1978 Mr. Paley will have celebrated fifty years of running one of the most successful television organizations in the world.

At this moment there are many international organizations all over the world, especially in Germany, England and Japan, where spectacular advances in broadcasting have been achieved.

GETTING CONNECTED

E.L.: You mentioned that when you first worked in television, you worked for the Dumont Network. Then there were four networks and now there are only three. What *is* a "network," and why did we end up with three? Is three some magic number?

L.P.: Three is an unmagic number as far as many producers are concerned. They would love to have a larger marketplace to go to. In fact, in the early part of 1977, several advertising agencies and some broadcasters joined forces to see if they could create their own network to compete with the big three. While that particular attempt failed, it is an idea that will tempt many others to try. But networks are not started overnight. In fact, there is a fourth network that took many years to develop. It is the Public Broadcasting Service, which distributes all the noncommercial pro-

grams throughout the country. PBS does the same things that the three commercial networks do—it sends out programs to its affiliates that it hopes they will carry. And that does not always happen. A documentary about controversial subjects such as busing or gun control might offend certain viewers. Some stations may turn it down, which is not only their right but always their responsibility. Just to remind you, it is the individual local station, not the network, that has the license. Therefore, it has to answer to the public and the FCC for the programs it broadcasts.

As to what a network is, technically it is the organization that buys programs from independent producers and distributes them nationwide. Networks do produce their own shows as well, especially in the news area. They make their profits by selling commercials on these nationally televised programs, which they promote extensively. They also rent phone lines from the American Telephone and Telegraph Company. Those lines are the way programs are sent electronically throughout the nation.

It takes hundreds of millions of dollars to produce and distribute national programs. That is why the financial power of a network is needed. There are some producers who are beginning to bypass the networks through syndication. That is, they sell their programs to each station directly. This has worked very successfully with such programs as "The Muppets Show" and "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman."

E.L.: At one point earlier, you were talking about how television grew so fast and how there had to be new

rules and procedures. I suppose it was like when the Wright Brothers invented the airplane. At first, it's just an invention, and then, suddenly, you need instruction and licenses and traffic regulations and government agencies. . . .

L.P.: That's exactly the idea. In 1934 President Roosevelt asked the Congress to create the Federal Communications Commission and Congress came through with the Communications Act of 1934. The FCC was established with seven commissioners who serve for seven years each. They regulate everything that has to do with television in the United States, including the telephone lines that carry network shows.

E.L.: When you say that the FCC regulates everything that

has to do with television, what does that mean? What do they regulate?

L.P.: It is really no different from what teachers do in a classroom, what police do with traffic laws; there are certain standards that have to be set, so that people know how fast they may go in traffic or what they can and can't do in a schoolroom. The FCC sets up guidelines which help stations know how they must serve the public.

E.L.: The kind of subjects they can deal with?

L.P.: *Everything.* They require that each station submit a log of every program they have had during that year. That must be available for the FCC to see at any time.

E.L.: So they can see the variety of programs that are being shown?

L.P.: Yes, stations must show a variety of programs to cover a wide variety of interests, including religious programs, children's programs and public-affairs programs. Also, a station can't simply put these programs on at six in the morning, or at other hours when the general public isn't available to watch them.

The reason that stations are so eager to comply with all these regulations is that the FCC has the right not to renew the license of that station. At the present time, stations have licenses that run for three years.

There are requirements that must be fulfilled before

a station's license can be renewed. It must prove that it is "operating for the public interest, convenience and necessity." It has to prove that it is providing news and public-affairs shows, as well as the entertainment which brings in the sponsors. It would have to make every effort to be fair in the coverage of the news, especially during election time. It can carry editorials about public issues such as school prayers, or busing, as long as time is provided for responsible people who disagree to air their views. Most important to us, it would have to show that it is serving the children of its community with programs that are specially designed for them.

The networks cannot apply for licenses for local stations, even if they own them. The stations are responsible for what they carry, so if they choose to show children's programs only on Saturday morning as their broadcasting for youngsters, the FCC could take a dim view of what they are doing for the public interest.

That is why, throughout the years, stations have kept an eye on the letters and phone calls that have come in from the general public, which includes children and special groups such as ACT. When I asked our readers to become imaginary station managers, it was for just this reason: when all is said and done, it is not the big executives in New York who must make the decisions and comply with FCC requirements—it is the people in charge of the local stations.

E.L.: What happens if these stations don't follow the regulations?

L.P.: In a few instances—very few—stations have actually lost their licenses for not following the FCC rules concerning children's programs, fairness or broadcasting enough different kinds of programs for the public interest. When station owners lose their license, another group can take over.

E.L.: Are there lots of groups waiting for stations to become available?

L.P.: Yes, there are, in spite of the fact that it is a very costly process. There used to be a saying that you had to be willing to lose $400,000 to start a station and then lose another $400,000 in the first year, before you could hope to begin to make a profit. But that was many years ago; today it takes millions of dollars to buy one of the more valuable stations. But groups are ready to spend this amount of money, because broadcasting can be a very profitable business.

E.L.: If station owners are threatened with the loss of their license, they can fight it, can't they?

L.P.: They can argue and say that what they are doing is in the public interest, or they can change what they have been doing and improve their programming.

E.L.: Does the FCC give them a certain amount of time to mend their ways?

L.P.: Yes, and that's determined by the FCC and the courts as to how much time is realistic. The FCC will give

them an opportunity to change. In some instances it has taken many years for the FCC to make its final decision to renew or not to renew. But the threat of a new group ready to take over is always there.

In addition to the networks themselves and the FCC, the Federal Trade Commission keeps a very close eye on advertising claims and the quality of products advertised. This is important to know, if there is ever a complaint about a product that you may buy or you have already bought. The Justice Department also keeps a watchful eye on the networks. It makes sure that those powerful organizations do not interfere with the rights of individual producers to sell their shows.

Stations and networks don't like government regulation any more than children like parental or school regulations; they feel that they can control their own activities responsibly. They have formed their own organizations and they set up their own codes of broadcast conduct. In fact, these organizations sometimes work closely with the FCC so that both are working toward the same end, even when they may disagree.

The best-known industry organization is the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), which is composed of network companies and local stations. Then there is the National Association of Television Program Executives (NATPE), which is a newer organization mainly composed of local stations. It has become a very powerful force in local programming. The NAB was founded in 1922. It has been involved in efforts to protect broadcasters from regulations by the government and from criticism by the public or special groups. The NAB is such a powerful organiza-

tion that the President of the United States will usually make an appearance at its annual convention.

The NAB has developed its own book of rules or code for programming and commercials, and all stations who belong to the NAB (sixty percent of the radio and television stations in this country do) support this code. The code includes such things as not having "sex and violence" in the early evening hours. It talks about how many minutes of commercials there should be per hour.

E.L.: Is the NAB code the same as the FCC rulings?

L.P.: They are very close to the FCC guidelines. One important thing to remember is that the FCC does not want to get involved with programming. It wants to regulate the fact that there should be enough *variety* of programs, but it doesn't want to be accused of actually controlling the programs themselves. That's how it got into a difficulty, by its encouragement of the "family hour."

THE FAMILY HOUR

E.L.: Please explain the family hour to me; I don't understand it at all.

L.P.: The family hour is exactly what it sounds like—the hour or hours when the family is most likely to watch television together, usually between 7:00 and 9:00 P.M. Many parents were embarrassed or outraged at some of the language and violence that was seen at the time

their children were still viewing. Their complaints, and, incidentally, the complaints of some major sponsors, led to an attempt by the networks to tone down the material seen at that time. And that's where the problem came in.

E.L.: What problem?

L.P.: The problem of trying to regulate what writers write and producers produce. These people felt that their right to create was being dictated by the networks, the NAB and the FCC.

E.L.: How did the NAB and the FCC get in the act?

L.P.: It was one of the rare times that these groups all agreed on a method of self-regulation. But a federal judge ruled that when they all got together, they were interfering with the rights of the producers to make their own creative decisions.

E.L.: Did that end the family hour?

L.P.: First of all, the NAB, the networks and the FCC did not agree with this decision. In any event, the family hour continues.

AND NOW A WORD ABOUT COMMERCIALS

E.L.: While the subject matter of many television programs bothers parents, isn't it true there are even more criticisms about commercials?

L.P.: There are many complaints about commercials. Some people think there are too many. Some think there should be none aimed at children. Some find them better than the shows. But there are some basic facts about commercials. There are strict regulations about how many there can be in an hour. Following the FCC guidelines, the NAB code indicates there should be no more than nine and one-half minutes of non-program time during prime-time shows, including six minutes of commercials; there should be no more than sixteen minutes for all other program time. After much public pressure, the nine-and-one-half-minute standard of non-program time has now become part of children's program time also. (There used to be as much as sixteen minutes for every hour of commercial time on children's programming.) That nine and one-half minutes of non-programming time covers station identification and promotions, "stay tuned for the next program," "we'll be back in a moment, but first this message," as well as all commercials.

E.L.: It seems to me, as a viewer, that there are a lot more commercials than the six minutes of commercials you are describing.

L.P.: What happens is this: the network says we only put on six minutes of commercials. But on the hour the local stations cut away for station identification. At that point, the local station is allowed to sell additional commercial time for its locality. There might be a total of twenty-five interruptions in one particular show. Most viewer complaints have to do with movies,

where it seems as if there is an interruption every five minutes.

THE PUBLIC BROADCASTING SERVICE

E.L.: I think I understand how the FCC and NAB can affect commercial television, but what about educational television? How did we get a public broadcasting system, and is there any group that works to set standards for it?

L.P.: Two big questions, Eda. The earliest form of noncommercial programming was called "educational broadcasting." (WNET–Channel 13 in New York is still called the Educational Broadcasting Corporation). Many stations were involved. Some of them were located on college campuses; others were on UHF and very few viewers would pay attention. In 1952 National Educational Television (NET), which was primarily funded by the Ford Foundation, became the network for all these stations. It actually produced its own programming such as "The Great American Dream Machine" and other imaginative series. "Sesame Street," while it was created and controlled by the Children's Television Workshop, actually started as part of NET.

In 1969 the Carnegie Commission decided that more money and greater coordination was needed for educational broadcasting, so it helped to create the Public Broadcasting Service, funded by Congress and private foundations. But unlike NET, PBS was not to create or produce programs; it could only encourage and finance them. To help lobby for that money from Congress, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting was

set up in Washington, with the chairman of the board to be appointed by the President of the United States. The idea was that hundreds of millions of dollars were to come pouring in from Congress. It has never happened.

But you asked about standards. PBS has its own restrictions on what it will put on the noncommercial air. There is a group comparable to the NAB called the National Association of Educational Broadcasters. It's very much like the NAB and is also based in Washington. There's a good reason for this; broadcasting organizations want congressmen and the President to make laws that are favorable to broadcasting. And in the case of public broadcasting, they get a good part of their money from the government, so they're very anxious to please the Congress. This is not necessarily a very healthy thing. For example, it makes it difficult for PBS to do the kind of programs that are courageous and controversial, the kind that might offend some government officials.

E.L.: In other words, if you have a Congress or a President that is not crazy about controversy, then you have more control of public broadcasting than when you have a Congress or a President that is more open to controversy?

L.P.: Most presidents and people in Congress are concerned with newspaper and television criticism. Television is particularly influential with the public. Commercial television reaches more people, so you will find public officials often accusing it of bias. Sometimes one group

will attack news broadcasters as being friendly to the other side, primarily to try to lessen the power of television news people to persuade.

When public broadcasting came along the public had the right to expect it to be independent in its news judgments. But as soon as PBS turned toward Congress for support, it became less courageous. If public broadcasting is to put on only programs that don't upset anybody, then it's lost its original purpose, which was to provide an alternative to what commercial broadcasting is doing. Now, because public broadcasting needs the money to stay alive, it has the same problems as commercial broadcasting. It's afraid to offend. It begins to want to appeal to very large audiences and get greater contributions, rather than serving the needs of people who may not always be served by commercial television.

THE RATINGS GAME

E.L.: Which reminds me, one of the things that I am really interested in is the rating system. To tell you the truth, it makes me very angry. I don't understand how it is possible to allow only twelve hundred people to decide what we watch. How did it begin, and will it always be this way?

L.P.: All people like to know if they are succeeding in what they are doing. Noah must have gotten a low rating when he tried to get people to listen to him about a flood that was about to occur. But, again, since a great deal of money is involved in broadcasting, sponsors and programmers try to discover if they are effectively

reaching the largest number of potential buyers. It's too expensive to call over a hundred million viewers; so they try to "sample" the most representative group they can find.

E.L.: But how did the rating system actually begin in broadcasting?

L.P.: It began in radio with the Hooper Ratings. Broadcasters have always been looking for some way to find out how many people are watching. They devised a system that researchers feel is accurate enough; it works very much like the polls taken before an election. There are just a few people who are scientifically selected and they supposedly give a sense of what everybody in the U.S. is in favor of. The rating company that the television networks pay the most attention to is the A. C. Nielsen Company.

The Nielsen ratings depend on a machine called an Audimeter, which is attached to the TV sets of 1,170 so-called "representative people." The Audimeter records what a Nielsen family watches. If someone turns a TV set on and leaves the house, the Audimeter will continue to record (incorrectly) that someone is watching a particular program at a particular time of day. To prevent such misinformation, each Nielsen family keeps a diary of what it has seen during the week. By the way, Mr. Nielsen claims that the television set staying on with no one watching is a rare happening. But if there were accidentally several events of that kind, the future of a program could be ruined (or saved) by inaccurate ratings.

The diary and the ribbonlike tape in the Audimeter are sent to the Nielsen company, which feeds the information into a computer. The result of the computerized information from all the Nielsen families determines the rating for each program for that night, or that week or that month. Using those ratings, the networks and local stations decide which programs will be taken off the air, which will be kept on and which will be changed to a different time of day.

E.L.: How often are the Nielsen people changed?

L.P.: There is nothing more secret than who the Nielsen people are and how often they change.

E.L.: Sometimes I wonder if there *are* any at all!

L.P.: I have never met a Nielsen person, nor have I met anyone who knew a Nielsen person.

E.L.: Neither have I, ever.

L.P.: That doesn't mean they don't exist. They are supposed to keep it a secret. You can imagine what would happen if a network were to find out who the Nielsen people are. Millions of dollars are spent on programming and each network has its own research department. They try to follow up what Nielsen says.

E.L.: Isn't there some kind of rating system where they call people at random to ask what program they are looking at?

L.P.: It would be considered "unscientific" and not representative. There are other rating companies that use different systems, such as mailing out postcards and in some cases following up with phone calls. One such company, Arbitron, is often used by local stations. There are also independent polling companies such as the Yankelovich group, which tested out "Sesame Street" and does some public-broadcasting surveys.

PEOPLE POWER

E.L.: I guess a lot of people feel the way I do, that no matter what anybody says, or how careful the statistics or research may be, the viewing audience as a whole ought to have more voice in the decisions about programming. If we really don't like the rating services, what can we do about it?

L.P.: Well, there are several things. Broadcasters have been impressed enough to keep, change or drop programs when there have been hundreds of letters and phone calls by large groups of people.

E.L.: So that's really the best weapon the audience has, isn't it? If they don't like the rating services, the answer is letters and telephone calls.

L.P.: That's true, but there are dangers here too. Especially if people protest directly to sponsors. In 1975 there was a program called "The Guns of August" which seemed to be against the indiscriminate use of guns. Word of the program leaked out and before the program was shown on television there was a mail campaign by

thousands of people who belong to rifle and hunting organizations. Most of the sponsors withdrew. One brave sponsor, the Block Drug Company, stayed on and refused to withdraw its sponsorship. Block Drug is still in business, but it is a tricky thing when people use their power to influence what will appear on television.

E.L.: Maybe there is an important difference between an *individual*'s writing to a sponsor and pressure by a large group, such as the groups which try to influence Congress.

L.P.: The important difference is between censorship and trying to support better broadcasting. The problem is that there is a danger in attacking the creative process. Unfortunately, there are very few alternative ways for individuals to express themselves. They can write letters to the station; to sponsors; or they can write to the FCC. But it takes an extraordinary number of people writing in about a program that's going to be taken off to have some influence in keeping that program on the air or to have it rescheduled for another day or time. It's happened with "Captain Kangaroo," when some local stations tried to take the program off to put on a movie hour which they knew would make more money. The public stopped the station from doing that.

BLACKLISTING: GUILT WITHOUT TRIAL

E.L.: Let's go back to a part of TV history. In the 1950s some people in television were secretly accused of being communists or communist sympathizers, without being

given any opportunity to defend themselves. I remember many people I knew who lost their jobs and were blacklisted so that no one would hire them. I remember that some sponsors brought pressure on the networks because they were getting pressure from so-called patriotic citizens. Why did the networks and even the unions give in so easily?

L.P.: Supposedly it's an economic problem—a matter of survival. Actually there's a great deal more to it than that. Fear of losing jobs, fear of losing sponsors can make people and even large organizations do strange things. For example, a man named Vince Hartnett published a newspaper called *Aware* which was distributed to the networks and advertising agencies. It would list those who were supposed to be communist sympathizers. John Henry Faulk, a newly elected vice-president of the actors' union, AFTRA (the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists), denounced the tactics of Hartnett and *Aware*. Hartnett, joined by a supermarket operator named Laurence Johnson, attacked Faulk as having been seen at a rally for communist causes. It took five years of a lawsuit by Faulk to win his case against both Hartnett and Johnson and prove he was unjustly accused. But in the meantime, he lost his job at CBS, where he had been a popular commentator, and in all that time he could not find employment in his field.

E.L.: Could that kind of thing happen today?

L.P.: At that time all the major networks simply reflected

the mood of the times. I guess the answer to your question is that it all depends on what the people of this country will allow. It certainly could happen again with the wrong President or a senator hungry for power. During the Vietnam War, the media, and especially public broadcasting, often presented documentaries and news that were not very supportive of our government's involvement in Vietnam. President Nixon set up an "office of telecommunications" which seemed designed to threaten the local station owners—if they supported the networks, there could be problems with their licenses. On the other hand, it was indicated to them that if they were friendly toward the Nixon administration they might be rewarded by having their licenses extended so they could run for five years instead of three years. The President had been elected to office by a landslide; one would expect broadcasters to be as fearful as they had been in earlier times. But it never got that bad.

It is true that more opposition to the President and exposure of government crimes tends to come from newspapers (such as the Watergate exposé in *The Washington Post*) rather than from television. But remember, Daniel Shorr of CBS News revealed the report on the CIA, and Dan Rather, also of CBS, openly debated President Nixon. Unfortunately, these are the exceptions.

SPECIAL FUN

E.L.: We've been talking about some very serious, heavy subjects. Could we talk about some of the *fun* you've had with television?

L.P.: "Fun" can be all kinds of things. It can be a funny event such as watching the opera star Beverly Sills almost pull down the scenery while trying to open a door, all without missing a note. Or it can be the pleasure of watching a child performer such as Jodie Foster develop as an actress from the age of ten, when I first worked with her, until she became a movie star in her teens.

My personal fun is in the control room, where I can sing along with anyone from Joan Sutherland doing an opera series for children to music teacher Charity Bailey instructing rhythms to first graders. In fact, I once sang so loud that Charity heard me from the control room and started to laugh on the air.

Part of the enjoyment comes from watching a good idea take shape and work as worthwhile television. There was a program called "Metropolitan Wonderland" with Thomas Hoving, a former director of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, as host. We traveled everywhere from fish hatcheries to the top of the Empire State Building, from Central Park to the famous pet shelter of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). Tom Hoving fell so in love with Central Park that he ended up as Parks Commissioner for New York City before he became a museum director. He did not fall in love with the ASPCA. During our filming there he introduced the children to the shelter's "gentle" mascot, Oscar the Parrot, who promptly bit him. Hoving never lost his smile, but he never made friends with Oscar.

E.L.: You also did some work with Danny Kaye, didn't you?

L.P.: The show we did together we actually did apart! He was at the United Nations and I was Executive Producer in Atlanta, Georgia. It was a fascinating project which was for children all over the world. It was actually produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation in cooperation with National Educational Television. I was the American Executive Producer and Danny Kaye was the host for children in twelve different countries. Each country presented a group of children doing their own special thing. I had found a very unusual group of schoolchildren in Atlanta who created their own plays, their own choreography, their own electronic music. What they did was so unusual and so creative that I made that five-minute segment represent the participation of the United States.

E.L.: You like to encourage children to participate in creating for television, don't you?

L.P.: Only if the children are doing it. Not if they are used as props for someone else's ideas. I believe that one of the most important things television can do is to help young people test their own talents.

E.L.: I remember you once told me about a Children's Film Festival that you created.

L.P.: Yes. There were three different categories—a senior group that was up to eighteen years old, a junior group that was up to fourteen and a younger group starting with eight-year-olds. One of the Grand Prize winners was an eight-year-old who did something that everyone

ought to do when beginning to write. He wrote about what he loved the most—in this case it happened to be his cat. He described ordinary things but sounded so loving in his narration that it was absolutely delightful.

E.L.: Is it only public television that can have these kinds of programs that allow young people to do creative work in television? Has it ever been done on commercial TV?

L.P.: Yes, it has been tried on commercial television with programs like "Take a Giant Step" on NBC, which was on Saturday mornings. NBC's Vice President of Special Projects for Children, George Heinemann, actually took the chance of having children to help produce the program. But it never received enough of those darn rating points, and it was taken off. On the other hand, there was a play on Broadway which was called "The Me Nobody Knows" in which children told how they really felt. I suspect that this would be very attractive for other children, if it were done on television.

E.L.: Speaking of kids, another thing you worked on was instructional TV.

L.P.: Yes, in its very beginnings. Lots of fun! We had to start from scratch, teaching teachers how to teach on television. One teacher took a look at the entire operation and said, "If that's what teaching is coming to, I want out!" The idea of facing a camera instead of a class made her quit teaching altogether. But most loved it. One math teacher even suggested jumping through a

hoop as a way of catching his audience's attention! We finally settled for his popping a few balloons!

At one point I mentioned the fact that educational television was the beginning of public broadcasting. Actually, the real beginning of noncommercial programming took place in schools where instructional television was being shown. Instructional television was first used to help teachers learn new teaching methods by watching more experienced teachers. Then some teachers were chosen to become television instructors. They were supposed to bring new ideas to the teacher in the classroom to make a particular subject clearer and more memorable to the students. Some teachers were afraid that the television teacher would eventually replace classroom teachers. Other teachers learned to use TV in the same way they would use a film or a new book. Most teachers were happy to learn that children preferred a live teacher to a television instructor.

E.L.: You have had such a varied career—done so many different things. Are there some things which you are prouder of than anything else? If you were to be remembered for one thing you had done, what would you like it to be?

L.P.: Children's programming, mostly; the "ABC Afterschool Specials" in particular. They represent, for me, the first real attempt to reach out to children's own problems, with *their* solutions rather than adult solutions. I hope that the children who saw these programs said to themselves, "This is my show; this is not what adults think I like. It really attacks the problems that I

can identify with." When that happens—and children have written letters to this effect—it is a most gratifying experience.

E.L.: One of the things that I think you should be proud of was the daily news program, "Newsfront." The thing that was so special about that program was that it took the audience to the sources—to people and places where truly important events were happening. And it left it to the audience to make their own judgments.

L.P.: That's exactly what I think ought to be the major function of television—helping people to make their own judgments rather than telling them what to think. It is frustrating because these days there is a great deal of discussion about the need for news programs to deal with issues in greater depth. That was the whole idea behind "Newsfront." We covered everything from the United Nations Security Council meetings to rock concerts; we interviewed everyone, from Hubert Humphrey to the Beatles—not just talked to them but found out what they were really like as human beings.

E.L.: Of all the things you have done, what would you like to do the most, now?

L.P.: I think I would like to create my own program and be able to work with the people I want to work with—performers, directors and so forth. Most of all, I guess I would like to direct children's programs.

E.L.: Is there one very special thing—a special dream?

L.P.: Yes. It's called The Institute. I would like there to be a place where people like you and me and others could get together and talk about and experiment with television. There would be people in broadcasting and people in the social sciences—educators, psychologists, television writers, producers, community leaders—all working on ideas that could influence programming, improve it. It is time that people were more sensitive to the importance of television as a tool for good or evil—its tremendous influence. To make it work well we need people with many different skills, different kinds of knowledge, all working together.

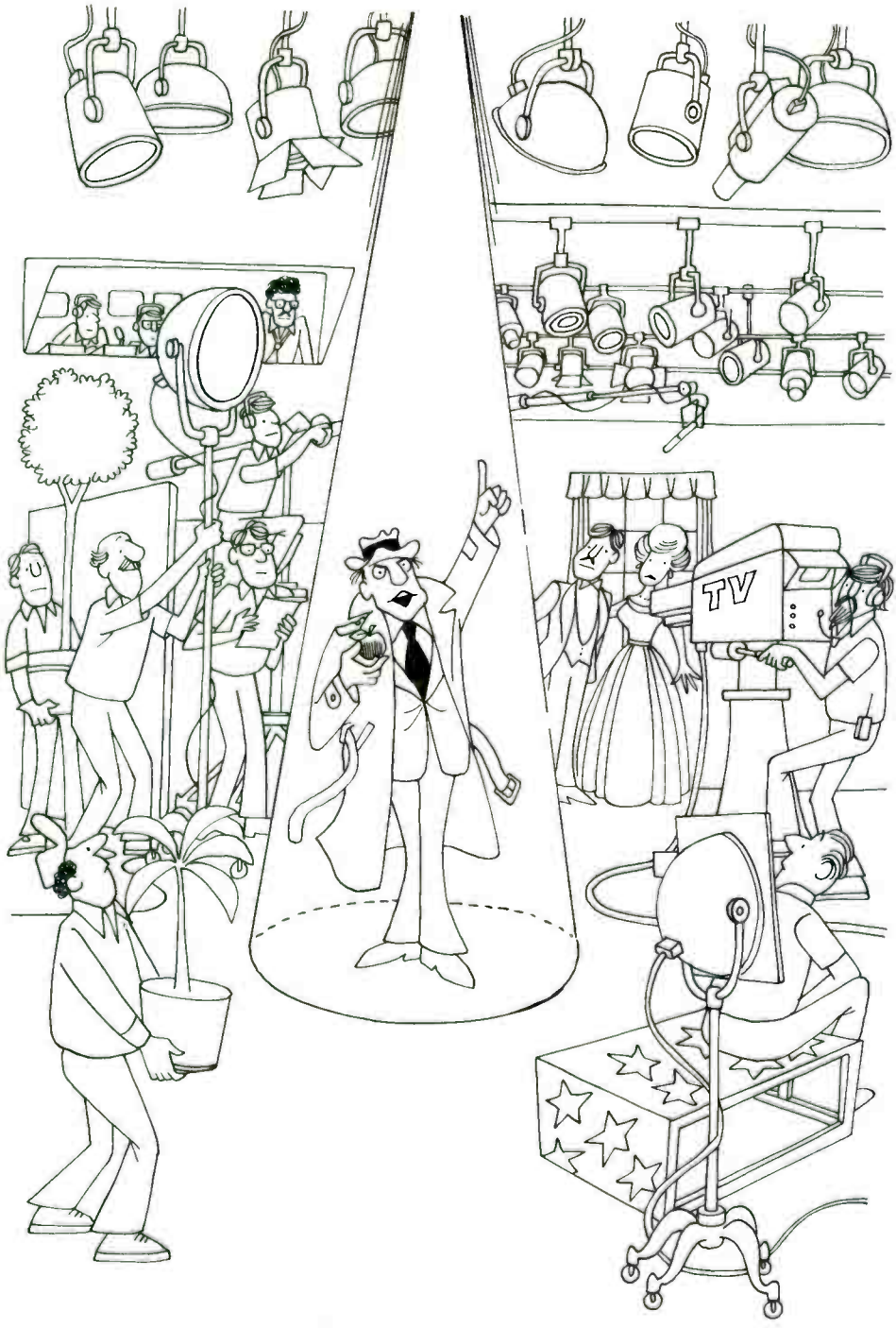
E.L.: Maybe when young people read this book, they will help us bring about your dream.

L.P.: Nothing could make me happier. Of all the things I've done in television, this is the one thing I would most like to see succeed.

E.L.: With all the different kinds of jobs in television, it's hard to tell which is the most important. Is there such a thing as the most important person in television?

L.P.: Aha! A good question. And not an easy one to answer. In fact, I think we might need the help of a special person to find the answer. I happen to know a very celebrated detective.

E.L.: Well, for heaven's sake, what are we waiting for? Let's *ask* him.


TV

The Case of the Mysterious M.I.P.

There are dozens of detective and police stories on television; but strangely enough, when you begin to think about it, very few are real mysteries. Instead of a whodunit, we are more likely to see a how-did-they-do-it—with a lot of emphasis on how-soon-will-they-get-caught.

You know how it works. Someone walks into a store. You *know* he's the bad guy and he's going to do something awful to that poor old storekeeper sitting behind the cash register. The reason you know so much about what is going to happen is because practically all television series use the same "formula." Bad Person Commits Crime—that's our old friend the teaser—something to hold you through the commercial and the credits. The hero detective finds out about the crime and sometimes chases the wrong person, usually gets clunked on the head by the real criminal and always, but always, ends up in a spectacular chase to catch the guilty party.

Someday maybe there will be some real mystery stories on television, again. There used to be more of them. And there

are still a lot of people who like those complicated, interesting plots, such as the ones Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote for Sherlock Holmes. Meanwhile we have a detective drama for you that is a mystery—a who-is-it. You will be the detective. There will be no chase and you won't get clunked on the head, but you may find out a few things about TV that you may never have thought about before.

You will not have to do all the work alone. To help you investigate you will have the celebrated private eye, Celery Keen. He's the famous sleuth who helps solve mysteries while eating his favorite vegetable—you guessed it—tomatoes! While tomatoes can make for sloppy eating, Keen explains that chewing celery while investigating clues would be too noisy.

The mystery that you and Celery Keen have to solve is: "Who is the M.I.P. of TV?" Celery informs us that the M.I.P. is the Most Important Person. To find the M.I.P. Celery says, "We must begin at the scene of the crime—I mean, the puzzle." And so we begin.

Setting: (A TELEVISION STUDIO RIGHT AFTER A NIGHTTIME SERIES HAS FINISHED TAPING ONE OF ITS PROGRAMS. EVERYONE STARTS TO LEAVE. CELERY KEEN ARRIVES, CARRIED IN BY A STAGEHAND, WHO THOUGHT THAT CELERY WAS A PROP FOR A TOMATO COMMERCIAL.) Celery jumps into the center of the studio, shouting, "Don't nobody here move."

A person comes running out of the control room shouting, "That's wrong! Terribly wrong!"

KEEN

Who are you?

WRITER

I am the Writer of this show and what you said is awful English; even bad American. *You used a double negative!*

KEEN

I never did no such thing!

WRITER

You did it again!

KEEN

Well, at least I got your attention. As long as you have all stopped moving around, I'll tell you why I am here. I am looking for . . . (MUSICAL STING—a sound, sort of between a "bong" and a "ping") . . . the M.I.P., the Most Important Person of television.

WRITER

(LAUGHS) Oh well, no problem; everybody can go home. I confess. I'm the guilty party. . . .

KEEN

Hold it! Don't nobody move! (AS WRITER STARTS TO PROTEST) All right, everyone freeze. (THEY ALL FREEZE) Prove you're the M.I.P., Writer.

WRITER

That's easy pie. (CELERY REPEATS THE PHRASE, GRIMACING AS HE BITES INTO HIS TOMATO) Where do all ideas begin for television? With me, of course. Nothing gets on television without a writer.

KEEN

Just a darn minute, Writer. I know that dramas have to be created by writers. I know there are writers for variety shows. In fact, I've seen dozens of them get Emmy Awards for the same program. But what about

special events like moon shots or presidential elections or things like that there?

WRITER

"Things like that there"—I can't stand it. Oh, well, Mr. . . . uh, what is your name?

KEEN

Celery Keen. Want a bite of my tomato?

WRITER

No, thanks, too sloppy. Mr. Keen, many of those extraordinarily brilliant words that you've heard Walter Cronkite or Barbara Walters say are often written by newswriters and editors. So whether it's a walk on the moon or a walk on a convention floor, there are cue cards and prompters that tell those marvelous personalities what to say. That goes for Johnny Carson and Bob Hope and even Fonzie. So you can easily see I am the M.I.P. (MODESTLY LOWERS HEAD, THEN PICKS IT UP) Do I get a prize?

KEEN

(WITH AN UNCERTAIN LOOK) Well, if there are no other suspects who will confess. . . .

PRODUCER

Just a second, Celery. Can I unfreeze now?

KEEN

Sure, you can. In fact, you can take a giant step, whoever you are. . . .

PRODUCER

Good. Thanks. And as for you, Writer—YOU'RE FIRED!

WRITER

(SUDDENLY LOSES HIS POMPOSITY, GETTING DOWN ON HIS

KNEES, PLEADING) Oh, Producer, what have I done? Please reconsider. . . .

KEEN

Aha. I have just made a deduction. You are the Producer. And by the way, why did you just fire the Writer?

PRODUCER

(LAUGHS HEARTILY) For no reason at all, Mr. Keen. In fact that's a darned good writer you've been talking to. But I believe in making a point as dramatically as possible, and I have just proved that *I* am the Most Important Person around here. Right, Writer?

WRITER

(NOT QUITE SURE WHETHER OR NOT IT IS SAFE TO STAND UP YET) *Right!* You're the boss! And I'll get right to work on next week's show, so you'll have to excuse me, Keen. . . . (AS WRITER LEAVES, THE STAR COMES TO LIFE, LISTENING TO THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN CELERY AND THE PRODUCER)

PRODUCER

You see, Celery. I am the one who hires all the people who work on this program. Since I can hire, I can also fire. I'm the one with the *power*—because I'm the one with the *money*. I make the final decisions on *everything*. If that doesn't make me the Most Important Person, I. . . .

KEEN

That's a very persuasive argument—but what has that got to do with how *good* a show is?

PRODUCER

(VERY IMPRESSED) That's a keen observation. Oh, there

are some producers who do nothing more than provide the money for the program, but that is not true of most of us. In fact, some producers, like myself, often have the idea for the show, hire the Writer, the Director, the Stars—the entire crew. I have to work out the shooting schedule, worry about scenery, costumes, makeup, lighting—I worry about everything. Just for all my worrying I deserve the M.I.P. Award. It *is* an award, isn't it?

STAR

Not so fast, Producer. If you do it all, I guess you won't be needing me any more. . . .

PRODUCER

(AGITATED) Now look what you've done, Keen. You have upset my Star. (PUTS HIS ARM AROUND THE STAR) Of *course* I need you, Star. Where would I be without you?

STAR

There you have it, Mr. Keen. You heard it. If the Producer can't get along without me, isn't it perfectly obvious that I am the Most Important Person?

PRODUCER

(WALKS OFF, MUTTERING) If I didn't need that Star for next week's show, I'd stick around and argue. Oh, well, one of these days I may figure out a way to get along without the Writer and the Star and they will learn who is the really important person in this business. (EXITS)

KEEN

Star, I appreciate your help. But there are still some unanswered questions. Don't you need a script? And how about all the people who put the program to-

gether, so you have a place to perform?

STAR

The answer to that is easy pie.

KEEN

(ALMOST CHOKES AS HE BITES INTO A FRESH TOMATO) What is this with "easy pie"?

STAR

Oh, that's an expression from my Writer. I get all my words from my Writer. . . .

KEEN

Aha! Then the Writer *is* the M.I.P. Right?

STAR

Wrong, silly. Who do the viewers tune in to see? (KEEN MAKES A NOTE) Me, that's who. That's why I'm more important than anyone. Ask my agent. Oh, my agent, I must go. He's signing me up for a new special in which I do a spectacular number in space. Uh, how do I get out of here?

DIRECTOR

There you have it, Mr. Keen. This Star of ours wouldn't know how to sit down in a chair if I didn't direct all the moves.

STAR

Ridiculous. But how do I get out of here?

DIRECTOR

Exit Stage Left, Camera Right. (TO KEEN) They're always the opposite of each other. (TO STAR) Remember to open the door before you leave. *(STAR EXITS)*

KEEN

Since you directed Star out of here, I deduce that you are the Director.

DIRECTOR

Brilliant, Mr. Keen. Would you like a part in next week's show? I'm casting for detectives.

KEEN

I know what you're trying to do, Director. You're trying to make me think you're the M.I.P. by flattering me. I can't be bought that way. By the way, how big a part is it?

DIRECTOR

Just give me my statue or whatever the award is and I'll tell you.

KEEN

Not so fast, Director. First, tell me what you do.

DIRECTOR

Everything. After the idea is written and the Producer hires everyone, I have to bring it all to life. I tell the actors where to move. I tell the sound men where the music is to come in. I okay the lighting and the scenery. And, of course, I tell the cameramen what pictures to take. I might work with three or four or five cameras if the program is on tape. Or I might work with one or two cameras if it is a film show. But I put it all together. Could there be anyone more important than me?

(SUDDENLY ALL THE LIGHTS GO OUT)

KEEN

What happened?

LIGHTING DIRECTOR

(AS THE LIGHTS COME BACK ON) I just wanted to prove something to you all.

DIRECTOR

Drat! There goes that show-off again. I'm leaving.

(EXITS IN A HUFF)

KEEN

What's the Director so huffy about?

LIGHTING DIRECTOR

He knows that without lights nothing he does will be seen on TV. (MODESTLY) I'm the Lighting Director. I make it possible for the Star and all the scenery and, well, just everything to have the right kind of light for the camera to see. That's why you all have to appreciate me as the M.I.P.—right, you all?

KEEN

I have a feeling you're from the South?

LIGHTING DIRECTOR

You must be a great detective.

KEEN

I am the celebrated Celery Keen. And If I weren't so celebrated I might be getting a little confused about who is really the M.I.P. In fact, I really think . . . (KEEN IS INTERRUPTED AS A CROWD OF PEOPLE WALK UP TO HIM) Wait a minute, who are you?

CREW CHIEF

Well, let me speak for everybody. I'm the Chief Engineer and I think everybody is important around here. There would be no picture without a camera operator. You need sound as well as picture, so there's an audio person who puts microphones around in just the right places.

KEEN

I'm beginning to get the idea. There also has to be a Scenic Designer for scenery. . . .

SCENIC DESIGNER

That's me. And don't forget my Set Decorator. You

have to have desks and phones. Even cups and saucers. And there are costumes and makeup people. . . .

MAKEUP PERSON

How right you are. If somebody has a shiny nose or deep circles under the eyes, nobody notices what's being said. . . .

COSTUME DESIGNER

Or if a circus ringmaster comes on TV without a hat, everyone will be too distracted to watch the acrobats. . . .

HAIRDRESSER

(TALKING TO THESE TWO COLLEAGUES) Listen—that's only part of what we do. How about the way we get together to make a twenty-five-year-old look eighty, or a fifty-year-old look twenty-five? Or what about the way we can change someone into a character who lived a thousand years ago, or fifty years ago? Or even ten thousand years into the future?

STAGEHAND

And nothing gets into place unless the stagehands put them there. That includes lights as well as those desks and phones.

KEEN

Yes, I recognize you. You're the one who carried me in here.

STAGEHAND

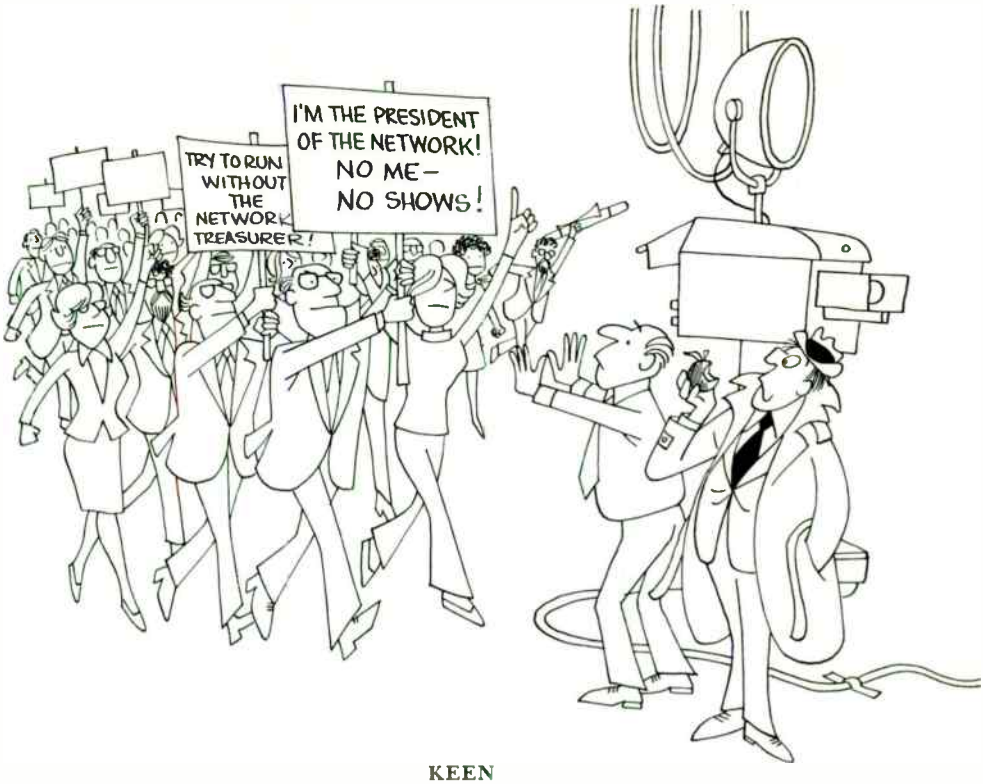
And you got tomato juice all over my shirt.

KEEN

No charge for that. All right. I think I have the picture.

CAMERA OPERATOR

But I haven't turned on my camera.



KEEN

Not that kind of picture. I mean I think I understand how important everyone is.

CREW CHIEF

Sure, there's even a transmitter engineer, who actually sends out pictures to the television sets all over the country—sometimes all over the *world*!

KEEN

Hold everything! The case is solved. . . . (SUDDENLY THERE IS THE SOUND OF LOUD VOICES, A MOB SCENE OUT IN THE CORRIDOR. THE DIRECTOR TRIES TO SHOUT THAT NO ONE IS ALLOWED TO MAKE ANY NOISE WHILE THERE IS A RED LIGHT ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE STUDIO DOOR, BUT HIS VOICE IS DROWNED OUT. THE DOOR OPENS AND HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE CARRYING PLACARDS RUSH ONTO THE SET.)

DIRECTOR

Ye gods! There must be a strike over at the Network Office Building! Now we've had it! (THE PLACARDS SAY SUCH THINGS AS)

"I'm the President of the Network! No me, no shows. . . ."

"Try to run a show without the Network Treasurer. . . ."

"Anybody ever think what television would be without Composers? Without Orchestras?"

"If my Advertising department doesn't get you sponsors. . . ."

"Who would ever hear about a program without the publicity I send out to the Press? . . ."

"Anybody ever try to get a job done in television without Secretaries? Production Assistants? Researchers? Telephone Operators? Maintenance People?"

(THE NOISE BECOMES MORE DEAFENING AS HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE SWARM ALL OVER THE STUDIO)

KEEN

Hold it right there, folks. I often run into these untidy situations as I begin to wind up a case. But I repeat, *The case is solved*! (EVERYONE QUIETS DOWN)

EVERYONE

Solved? What do you mean, Celery Keen?

It is usually at this point that the celebrated Celery Keen asks you to examine the clues and make your own deduction.

At one point the Star said something that stopped Keen from eating his tomatoes long enough to jot down a note.

But it seemed to be the words of the Chief Engineer that put it all together for Celery Keen. You may have figured out the case of the mysterious M.I.P. If you haven't, it doesn't matter, because our super private eye is about to spill the beans (or the tomatoes). As we return to Celery and the mob scene, we see the famous detective point to his tomato:

KEEN

It's as plain as the seeds in this tomato. (CHEWS ON HIS TOMATO AS HE GESTURES WITH HIS HAND) Mmmmph-mmmphmmm. . . .

EVERYONE

Huh?

KEEN

Sorry, I should never talk with my mouth full. Okay, so the Producer hires everyone, and the Writer creates the words, and the Director tells people where to go, and the Star performs, and there's the work of the Cameraman and the Lighting Director and everyone else—but what *is it all for*?

EVERYONE

For money?

KEEN

No, no. I should have said, *who* is it all for?

EVERYONE

Ah, the audience!

KEEN

Right on! When the Transmitter Engineer sends out that pretty picture, it takes someone to turn on a television set before anything you've done matters at all.

EVERYONE

(SIGH) So we don't count at all.

KEEN

Of course you count! It is the whole team that makes television happen. But the award for the Most Important Person has to go to the Viewer.

EVERYONE

What's the award?

KEEN

Let's hope it's a good show. (TOSSES HIS TOMATO TO THE STAGEHAND, WINKS AT EVERYONE AND EXITS)

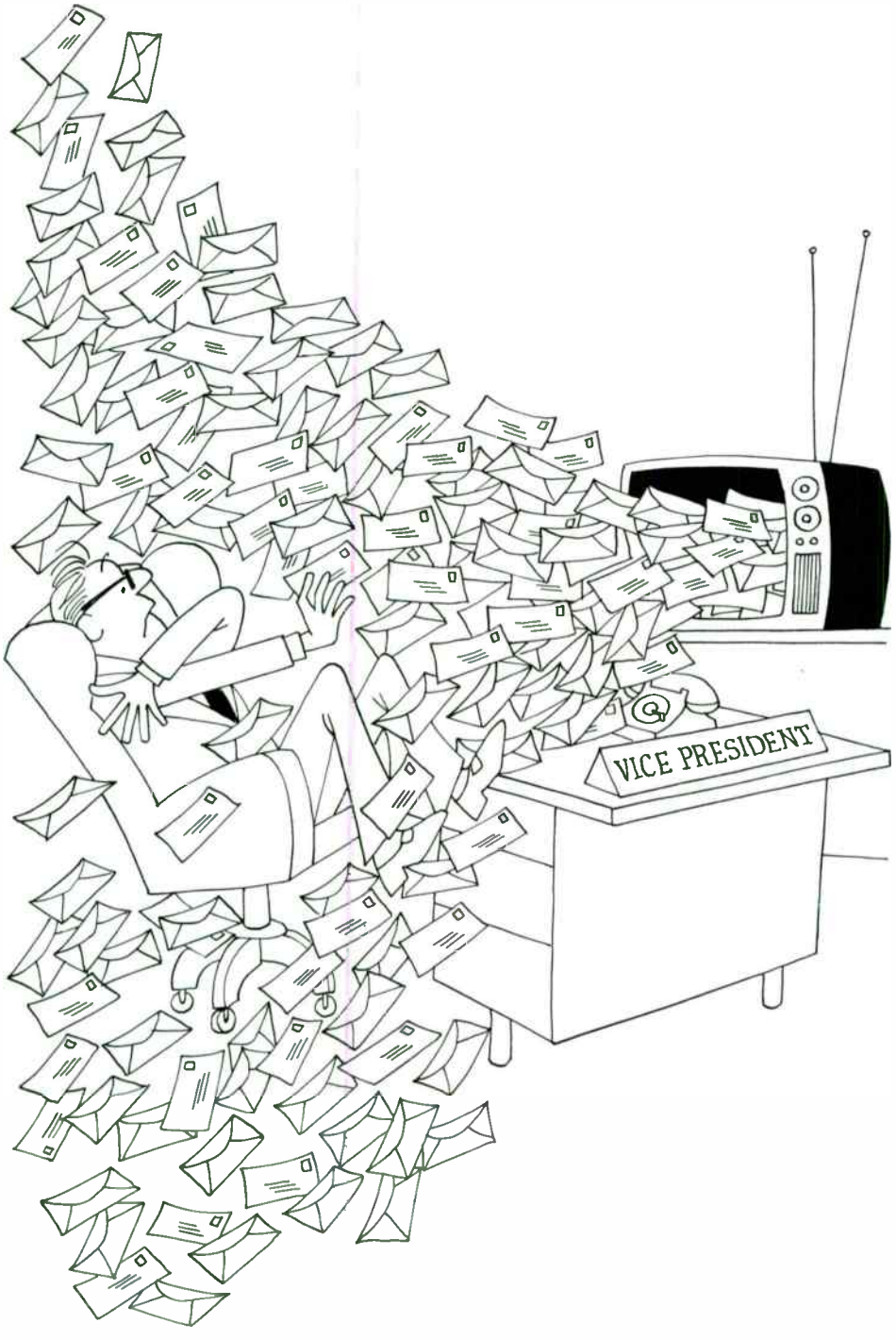
It is not by accident that nobody came along carrying a placard to represent the one who turned out to be the Most Important Person. We needed a detective to figure it out because in "real life" the viewers, the audience, rarely believe that they are important at all. Most people seem to believe that there is nothing they can do to influence what is on television. A lot of people mumble and complain, but what they seem to be saying most of the time is, "What's the use? There's nothing *we* can do about it."

Now that we have had the remarkable skills of Mr. Keen to help us identify the Most Important Person, things are back in their proper order. Television is only worth talking about because of how it affects *you*. It can give you a headache or it can show you something you have always wanted to see; it can make you angry or sad or excited or happy. It can be boring or hilarious or bring tears to your eyes. It can bring you wondrous adventures or turn your brain into mush. At its best, television can help you to understand important things about yourself as well as help you to un-

derstand other people. And it can open windows on the world with exciting ideas and information.

Whether or not these special kinds of things happen depends on many of the Most Important People. We think it would have been just great if that make-believe studio had been filled with viewers telling Celery Keen that they knew—absolutely, positively—that *they* were the most important of all. Maybe that will happen some day. To be sure, some of those people will be grownups; but a lot of them will be your age, too. Maybe that's a scary idea—that young people can begin to shape future events—but isn't it pretty exciting, too?

It seems to us that it is time for the voice of the Most Important Person to be heard in Television Land.



Take It from Here

You have really been through it. You've had to work day and night, seven days a week, as a station manager, and now you find out that as a viewer you're the Most Important Person to television. Where do you go from here?

"Not so fast," you may say. "I am perfectly happy with my TV set just as it is. What do you want me to do, throw away the television set and just sit and read all day?"

"Not so fast," right back to you. We are neither for TV nor against it, any more than we are for telephones or against them. It is how television is used that counts for us. Do we want you to read? You bet. At the very least you are going to read your television guide to find out what is on. What is more, if you were to create a video show of your own you would have to write some sort of script, do some research and maybe read some books on how a TV show is put together. Read or watch TV? It is like asking, "Would you like steak or a hot-fudge sundae?" For most people the answer is both, especially at the right time. We are in favor of television-watching at the right time, in the right place

and for the right purpose (which may be no more than the need to relax).

Back to that question: "Why do I need to do something?" The answer is that unless you get involved with television programming as it is now, it could change to a form that you may not like at all. *And it could happen because no one knew that you really cared.*

Aren't you used to that by now? How many times have you felt that no one took the time to find out how much and how deeply you cared about anything? If you're like most kids we know, it probably makes you angry when adults say, "Tell me what *you* think," and then before you can answer, they go on telling you what *they* think (as if you didn't already know!). Feeling that they are not really interested in your ideas and reactions, you simply stop communicating at all.

This can set up a chain reaction. You think they aren't really interested in you. They think you don't care enough to speak up, so they take over for you. Parents and teachers start to tell you not only what you should know but what you should think! You may keep the chain going by saying: "I don't like people telling me what to think, so I'm going to do the opposite of what they tell me; or I may do nothing!" And so the battle of hurt feelings goes on.

There are some notions on how to break that chain. There is a book by Louise Fitzhugh called *Nobody's Family Is Going to Change* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1974). It's about two children who learn they should stop expecting their parents to change their fixed ideas about what youngsters should and shouldn't do. They find out instead that they, the children, should change themselves to do the things they want to do.

There are some cases where children have actually organized to create "Kid Power." During the 1976 Presidential conventions, a group of youngsters, already reporters for a magazine called *The Children's Express,* formed a newspaper supplement. A twelve-year-old reporter for the magazine was able to scoop the nation's top political writers by being the first to predict correctly that Walter Mondale would become President Carter's choice for Vice-President.

How did this enterprising reporter do it? "My first source," wrote Gilbert Giles, "was a high government official who knew about Senator Edmund Muskie's conversation with Governor Carter in Plains, Ga." Giles discovered that Carter asked Muskie many questions about Mondale. But the clincher for Giles was when he talked to children of convention delegates. He said that his main advantage was that "adults don't think children listen or understand." Since then newspapers and magazines all over the country have developed a healthy respect for this group of young and able reporters.

Such activities may seem to be more trouble than they are worth. Sometimes you may feel as if all you want is to be left alone, to do your own thing. Isn't that your right, you may ask?

Speaking of "rights," a curious document fell into our possession recently. It seems to bring the Bill of Rights up to date because the original one did not include television. We don't know if the writer was serious; we leave that to your judgment.

The New Bill of Rights

1. I have the right to look at as much television as I want to, whenever I want to—and that includes all the

so-called garbage that my parents accuse me of watching.

2. I have the right to eat what I want to; sugared cereals and candies whenever I feel like it; and to be free from adults' complaints about the "junk" I am putting in my stomach.

3. I have the right to stay up as late as I want to, and if I'm sleepy for school the next day, that's my problem.

4. I have the right to read or not to read, whether or not it makes me healthy, wealthy and wise. And what I read is my choice, comic books, magazines or the labels on soda-pop cans.

5. I have the right to buy the games and toys I want to buy—not just the educational stuff that's supposed to be "good" for me.

6. I have the right to enjoy horror movies and action detective shows because I like a lot of action.

7. I have the right to have friends or not have friends as I see fit. And if they don't want to do the things I want to do, then who needs them.

8. I have the right to go out or not to go out. I don't see why I have to leave my room or the den if I don't feel like it.

9. I have the right to do what I please in school. And if I do poorly, it's my teacher's fault.

10. More important than making decisions about all the above is my right to take the time to find out who I am and what I want to be.

Many people, including many adults, would shout "Right on!" to the ideas in this New Bill of Rights. Some of these grownups, of course, would be advertisers, programming executives and toy manufacturers! Others might be those

teachers and psychologists who like to hear you "tell it like it is." But it doesn't matter what anyone else says about those ten propositions. What counts is how you feel about them. Are they right for you? As a matter of fact, we are sure that many of you are thinking, "That's not my Bill of Rights." In fact, some of you may be thinking that for the most part it is a Bill of Wrongs. Perhaps your Bill of Rights would be something like this:

The New Bill of Rights (#II)

1. I have the right not to wear myself out watching television. In fact, I hate myself in the morning when I feel exhausted, just because I was too lazy to turn off the TV set the night before.
2. I have the right to avoid the pain that comes with cavities. I can get my sweet "kicks" from things like dried apricots, frozen orange juice on a stick (which I can make in my freezer) and sugarless gum. No offense to my dentist, but I wouldn't mind missing him for months.
3. I have the right not to feel punchy and sleepy in school. There are too many things happening with my friends and too many extra-curricular activities for me to poop out because of too much television-watching.
4. I have the right to find my adventures wherever I can; in books, on TV, on a trip with my parents, on a hike in camp. Comic books and TV are okay, but sometimes I need to read books because they turn me on to the thoughts in my own head.
5. I have the right not to spend my money foolishly on games and action toys that don't seem to work the way they do in the commercials on TV.

6. I have the right to a good night's sleep, one without the nightmares I get from seeing close-ups of monsters and supernatural creatures in movies and on TV. Also, those police action shows make me jumpy.
7. I have the right to be with real people like my friends rather than the people I can't talk to on my TV set. While I like some of the people I see on television, I can't share my problems or the things I'm happy about with them.
8. If I can work out the time and money, I have a right to see as much of this world as I'd really love to. Sure, television can take me everywhere. But that's not enough for me. I would much rather watch a moon eclipse with my own eyes than watch a TV camera "see" the same thing for me.
9. I have the right to do as well as I think I can in school! I feel better when I feel proud of the work I do. I like myself more that way. If TV can help me, that's all to the good.
10. More important than making decisions about all of the above is my right to take the time to find out who I am and what I want to be.

The truth of the matter is that any one person could easily write both of these "Bills of Rights." Each of us is likely to have all these feelings and ideas, all mixed up together. However, there is *one* kind of feeling we are likely to have *all* the time, and that is number ten. That's why it's the same on both Bills. It is the most important one.

Do you lead a glamorous life like Starsky and Hutch or Charlie's Angels or the space explorers on "Star Trek"? No.

And neither do the actors who play all those roles. The parts they play are not real; the situations are not real; the places they live in or go to are created just for the television series. To this date, we have never met a Bionic Man, Woman or Child. Nor do we know lawyers who never lose cases, doctors who never lose patients or patience, and detectives who always wear raincoats, chew lollipops and always get their man or woman.

You exist, however. Since you were not dreamed up by a writer and do not have to wait for a director to tell you what to do, you can say and do things that are important to you. And if you say and do things loudly and clearly enough, people will listen.

It may already have happened to you in your own school. A group of classmates gets together and forms either a student government (often encouraged by the superintendent or principal) or just a gripe committee. Things have been changed when students exercise their right to speak about what affects them, whether it is chaos in the cafeteria, the lack of gym or music facilities, or the code of discipline. In some instances, school districts are asking students to join teachers and principals in helping to evaluate new administrators.

The same situation has happened and is continuing to happen to television. Shows that were supposed to have been taken off were kept on because the public complained. As we mentioned before, commercials that tried to sell vitamins to children were withdrawn after a complaint by ACT, which represents thousands of people getting together to fight for what they think is right. In one instance, a network series was removed despite the letters and phone

calls from the many people who enjoyed the show. The executive who removed it was himself removed from his position a few months later.

Whether you call or write to a station, network or sponsor, it is important that you express yourself to the people who can help the most. For example, don't address your letter "To whom it may concern." It may "concern" a very nice young person in the mailroom who probably agrees with you but hasn't the vaguest idea of what to do with your concern. If you are writing about a children's program, there are people who work solely in the children's-programming area at the networks. Therefore, you would write to the Vice-President, Children's Programming, NBC (30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10020) or CBS (51 W. 52nd St., New York, N.Y. 10019) or ABC (1330 Ave. of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10019).

It is always more impressive to use the actual name of the Vice-President, which is easy to obtain by calling either the network or the station which carries the programs in your area. It is easy to understand why an individual appreciates your taking the time to find out his or her name. Have you ever received mail addressed to "Occupant"? It makes one feel it doesn't make any difference who is there as long as someone listens and buys. It could turn you off. The same is true for executives at the networks. So write to one human being by name. (If you are wondering why we do not give you the specific names to write to, it is because positions at the networks change.)

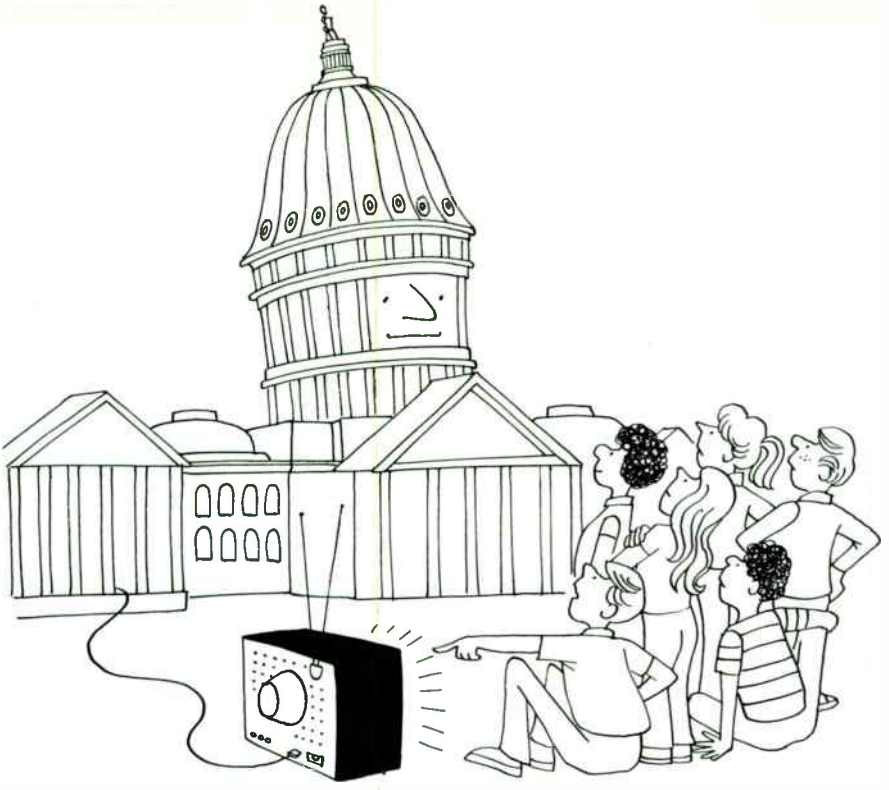
Remember, it is worth your time to write that letter. We have been present at programming meetings where three or four letters were discussed for hours. One of the main reasons is that the networks are aware that these letters rep-

resent thousands of people who also care but don't write. (This is something like the principle behind TV ratings.)

As far as local stations are concerned, there may not be a specific person in charge of young people's programs. At some stations you may write or call the General Manager. At other stations, the appropriate person may be the Station Manager or the Program Director. All are interested in your ideas. In certain instances, it would be useful to write to the producer of the program that you want to comment about.

Sponsors are more difficult to find, unless they are local advertisers in your town. National sponsors are represented by advertising agencies, who usually buy the "spots" on commercial television. To find out the right agency and/or the sponsor to write to, you could contact an organization such as the ACT group we have talked so much about (see page 138 for address). They have done much of the research for you in this area. You might prefer discovering the right people in the advertising world by going to your local public library. Several reference books contain the names of sponsors, advertising agencies and their Vice-Presidents and addresses. Librarians would be very happy to help you find the right book for this purpose.

The Federal Communications Commission (1919 M Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20554) is very interested in your views. There is a Children's Programming Unit that is a part of the FCC. The Director of that unit is constantly involved with trying to help the FCC to make useful decisions and guidelines about children's shows. It may not surprise you to know that the government is interested in what you have to say. Not too long ago, an eleven-year-old girl was asked to testify about the effect of commercials on children before a sub-committee of the House of Represen-



tatives. Remember, too, that the Federal Trade Commission (6th and Pennsylvania Avenues, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20580) regulates the products you see advertised on television.

One special note about writing: for some people writing is used mostly for complaining. That is neither fair nor useful. You must be able to express yourself about the things you like about television as well as the things that make you uncomfortable and angry. Organizations such as the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences which awards the Emmys, and our old friend, ACT, give awards to producers of children's programs as an incentive to create better programming. Imagine how much more programmers would listen to you and your friends if you told them how much you appreciate their efforts to try new ideas in children's television.

You can also get involved directly by learning more about the television medium itself. Many schools are providing inexpensive camera and videotape equipment for students to work with under the guidance of their audiovisual directors.

In one school district in Port Washington, New York, some youngsters who were having difficulties learning to read and write were encouraged by a very imaginative teacher to use television to present any material they desired. The results of that experiment ranged from news broadcasts about the school to poetry readings created by the same students. Fascinated with their new opportunities to express themselves and develop interesting broadcasts, they soon learned the skills they needed. In many schools throughout the country, experiments of the same kind are being tried by Social Studies, Drama, English and Science classes.

Whether or not such projects exist in your school community, you and your friends and classmates can create your own video programs, either with Super 8mm film (which is now being used by many stations throughout the country for news broadcasts) or videotape cameras or both. As you saw in "The Most Important Person," any program is a result of team effort. You need a writer or writers, a director, a producer (the one who organizes all parts of the production), a cameraperson, a lighting person (especially if you shoot indoors), scenic designers, stage managers, an audio director and, of course, actors. There have been productions which involved practically the entire school, including the faculty, as performers. You need scripts, storyboards (which lay out what the entire program will look like, something

that can be changed as you go along), rehearsals after school and on weekends, costume changes and special effects.

There is more that you can do now to get involved in the television scene. You may want to contact ACT, Action for Children's Television (46 Austin Street, Newtonville, Massachusetts 02160). Led by its President, Peggy Charren, that group has been the leading proponent of better television for children. With their help, you might even set up a Junior ACT Association in your own community, which might develop into a "network" of young people all over the country. We know that Mrs. Charren is eager to hear from you and has many ideas on this subject.

In the not-too-distant future there will be opportunities for you to investigate being part of television in other directions such as cable TV, satellite originations, pay television, closed-circuit television and special instructional and entertainment series on videotape cassettes and videodiscs. There was great promise when cable and pay TV came about, just as when educational television (later public broadcasting) first began. ETV kept part of its promise by using techniques to try to create a new television art. Cable and pay TV are at present simply trying to survive by offering commercially acceptable presentations.

It would be misleading to say that you alone can change all of television today or even tomorrow. But you have a chance that your parents did not have. You know more about television and how it works. You can help by being a concerned viewer or by eventually getting into the industry itself.

There is one more vital area in which you can assist. We talked about The Institute in Chapter Five. It is the kind of place where ideas are born and experimented with. Remem-

ber that while it is intended to be a meeting ground between creative talents in television and the social scientists who are very concerned about you, it would be incomplete without the input you could bring to such a project. Imagine, if you will, children from all over this nation giving suggestions about the new ideas in television *before* new programs are born! Some people at the networks have tried to work with children as part of their research as to what would work and what would not, especially on Saturday mornings. ABC's Vice President of Children's Programming, Squire Rushnell, went so far as to try to create a National Advisory Board composed solely of children, who were supposed to react to present and future programming.

The Institute we would like to see get started would encompass anyone and everyone who is concerned with making television more useful to your purposes. Which brings us back to the question we were concerned with at the beginning of this book. Will television use you or will you use television? By this time you know we feel strongly that it must be the latter.

We have also tried to tell you how to use television. By understanding something better, you gain more personal control of it. That goes for television and for you as well. We have described how TV signals go through the air in a series of waves such as occur when a pebble is thrown into the water. We have tried to throw a pebble into your thoughts. We want to create many idea waves in ever-increasing circles as you grow and learn as much as you can about yourself and the world you live in.

We know that you will have special new ideas we could never have thought of ourselves. That's the wonder of it;

we have so much to teach each other. The incredible television machine can help us. It is part of our adventure of living. The way we share that part of the adventure is as important now as it was when that "box and the mirror" were shown publicly for the first time at the New York World's Fair in 1939. Things have not changed in these ways: The box cannot decide whether to leave itself on or turn itself off. The box cannot change what is on it, *YOU CAN*!

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