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# PANORAMA

TELEVISION  
TODAY AND  
TOMORROW

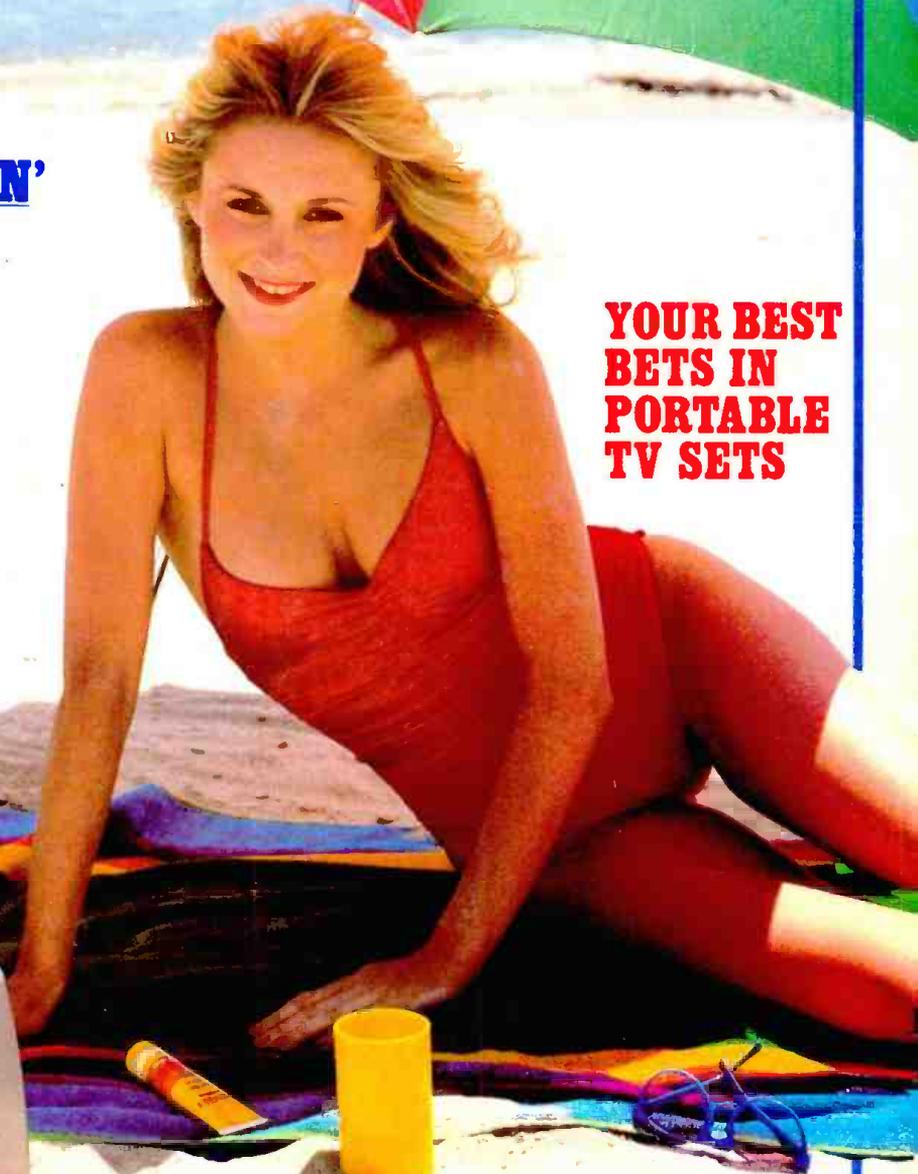
AUGUST 1980  
\$2.00

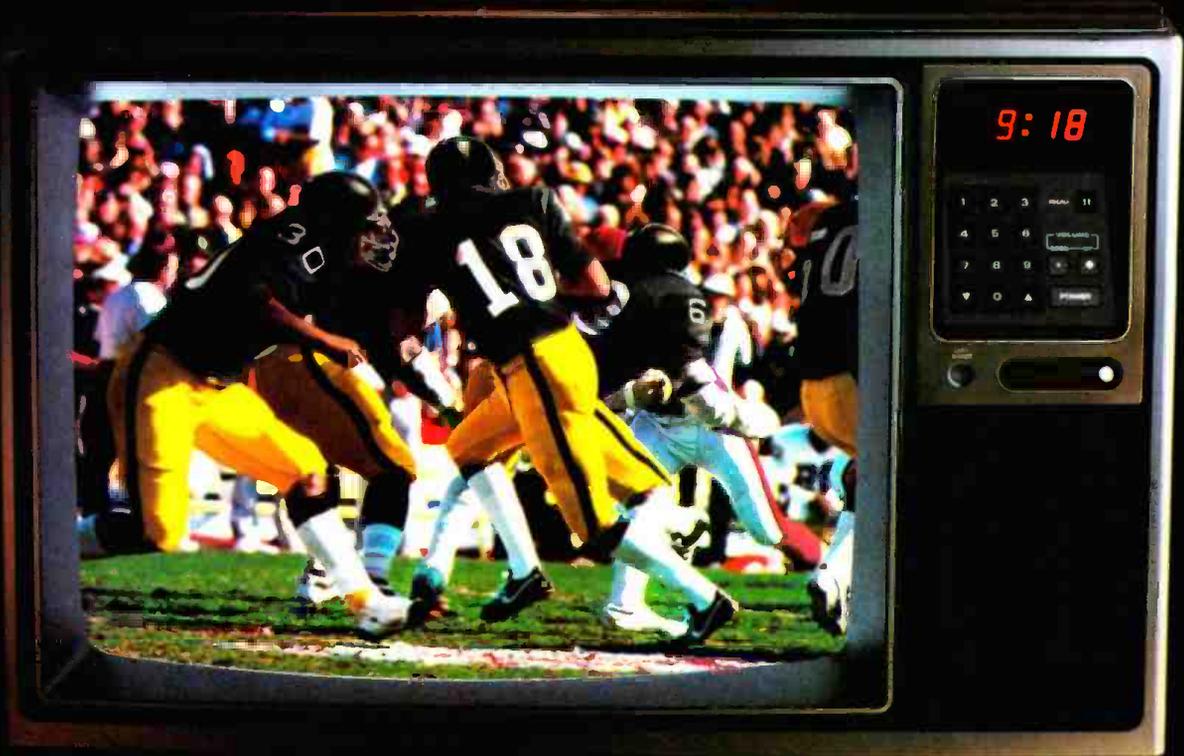
**CONFESSIONS  
OF A VIDEOTAPE  
PIRATE**

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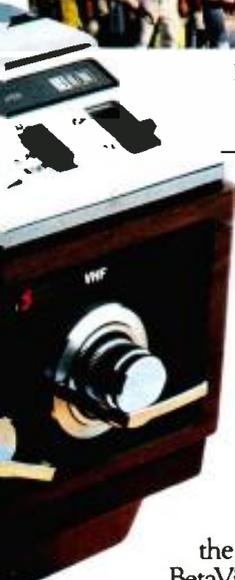
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There's nothing cheap about the Dasher, including the price. But the fit and finish are equal to just about any car made.

The only thing you give up are some old-fashioned ideas about what a car ought to be.

\*Dasher Diesel Sedan 0-50 mph in 13.0 sec.

# VOLKSWAGEN DOES IT AGAIN



# PANORAMA

TELEVISION  
TODAY AND  
TOMORROW

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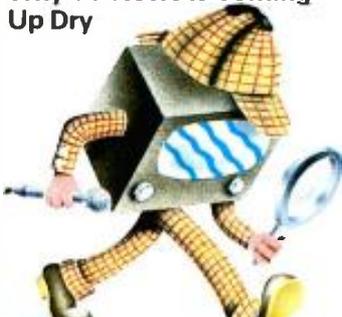
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PANORAMA MAGAZINE (ISSN 0191-8591) IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY TRIANGLE COMMUNICATIONS INC. 850 THIRD AVENUE, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10022. PLEASE ADDRESS ALL EDITORIAL MAIL TO PANORAMA MAGAZINE, P.O. BOX 950, WAYNE, PENNSYLVANIA 19087. ADDRESS ADVERTISING MAIL TO PANORAMA MAGAZINE, 850 THIRD AVENUE, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10022. SUBSCRIPTIONS: UNITED STATES, ONE YEAR \$15.00. CANADA AND MEXICO, ONE YEAR U.S. \$21.00. ALL OTHER COUNTRIES, U.S. \$30.00. REMIT BY CHECK OR POSTAL MONEY ORDER. CURRENCY SENT AT SUBSCRIBER'S RISK. SEND NO STAMPS. SUBSCRIPTIONS WILL START WITHIN SIXTY DAYS AFTER RECEIPT OF ORDER. SEND SUBSCRIPTION CORRESPONDENCE TO PANORAMA, SUBSCRIPTION

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# THIS MONTH

AUGUST 1980

Apocalypse Soon... Telling the Truth About Sponsors...  
Sports at Saturation Point?... Big Fish Jump for Turner... The British Suicide Joke

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

### HOLLYWOOD

#### Don Shirley reporting

**Coming soon?** Two big crystal balls are in the works as television miniseries. NBC is preparing *World War III*, a look at what might happen if the Russians invade Alaska, based on an idea originated by hotshot literary-agent-turned-editor David Obst. According to Obst, "It'll scare the s--- out of everybody."

It's being developed at Universal Studios simultaneously with Universal's unrelated theatrical-film version of the next world war. The big screen's *World War III* is set in Europe.

Meanwhile, at ABC, a more benign dramatization of the future, currently called *The People of the Earth: 2000*, is underway. A roster of futurists has been consulted on the details of this six-hours-plus project, in an attempt to ensure that "it's not just a gee-whiz hardware show, but will present real images of what the world is likely to look and sound like," says co-producer Gael Phillips. "We've been seeing *Star Trek* and *Buck Rogers* for years, and then we turn on the eleven o'clock news and see the leading edge of a dramatically different future. That's the future we're heading for."

Can we look forward to that future? Well, viewers are likely to be "blue after the first episode—there are some fairly grim times forecast," says

Phillips. The first episode will begin at the turn of the millennium in the midst of famine and depression, and will follow three families for a generation.

Later episodes, however, are likely to cheer us up by showing how determination and ingenuity pull mankind out of its slough. Phillips says world wars and holocausts may well happen in real life, "but it's not useful to show them. What's useful is to show people working out their problems."

One of the biggest roles in *The People of the Earth: 2000* will be played by television itself, which Phillips predicts will be even more pervasive than it is now.

**Black hole.** The prospect of a dramatic series with a black as the undisputed star is noticeably dimmer this year after the ratings failure of James Earl Jones in *Paris* and Louis Gossett Jr. in *The Lazarus Syndrome*. No such shows are on the fall schedule.

"It's frightening but predictable," says a leading black producer. "After James Earl Jones and Lou Gossett struck out, even black creative people were hesitant to come up with any ideas because of the feeling that the market is not there."

"The company line is that the majority of the white audience doesn't cross over enough to such shows to make them successful. And the *Beulah Land* controversy [over the portrayal of blacks in the recently filmed NBC mini-

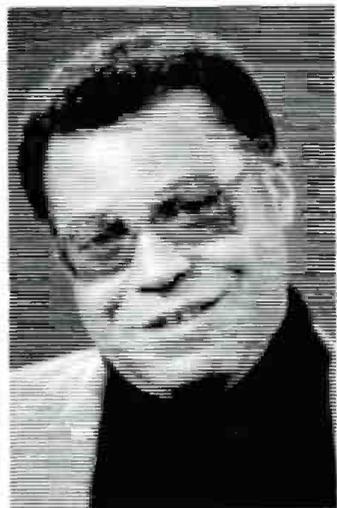
series] makes it more difficult. The networks say they can't satisfy anybody, so they give up."

Eric Monte, a black writer who helped create some of the successful black situation-comedy series, is more vehement on the subject. "Not to have any black dramatic series on the air in 1980 is a crime," he declares. "The networks will tell you black dramas don't sell, but they will totally close their eyes to the phenomenal success of *Roots*."

He suggests that black dramas produced by blacks—such as himself—might have a better chance of success than did *Paris* and *The Lazarus Syndrome*, which were produced by whites: "The only way to get a quality product is to utilize the people with experience in the culture."

**Brutal trio.** NBC has scheduled a major project for this season that will serve as a gauge to measure the current network attitude toward the handling of on-screen violence. *The Gangster Chronicles: An American Story* tells a potentially bloody tale—how such characters as Bugsy Siegel and Lucky Luciano reached the top of their chosen field. The film was conceived as a six-hour miniseries covering the years 1906 to 1932, but now it's likely that further adventures of the mob will go on the air as a regular series.

Violence is inherent in the story—"It would be untruthful not to demonstrate that there



James Earl Jones: Paris was a bad trip.



Charles "Lucky" Luciano: Worthy of a chronicle.



Frank Langella: Night prowler with fangs.



Sally Field: Oscar-winning millworker.

was a war going on in American cities in the Thirties," says supervising producer James McAdams. He hopes to depict the violence—including mass slayings—as authentically as possible "from a TV purview," he says. "When people are shot, there will be a realism about it." He believes this will deglamorize his otherwise "humanized" characters. "If we thought we were glorifying them in any way," he promises, "we would all abandon the project. They've done a lot of harm to this country." Incidentally, some names will probably be changed in order not to provoke the guilty.

## NEW YORK

### Doug Hill reporting

**Naming names.** Consumerism is hot these days in the (so far) commercial-free medium of pay-TV. The pay-cable service Home Box Office has decided to produce at least four more of its "Consumer Reports" specials, after finding that the first one, "The Food Show," scored the highest viewer-satisfaction rating ever recorded for an original HBO program.

Now Showtime, the second-largest pay-cable network, has signed Ralph Nader to produce a special, titled "For the People," which will be shown this month. If it is successful, it may be turned into a series. (Nader is also a commentator for the Cable News Network, which does carry advertising.)

With few exceptions, consumer information that names brand names and debunks the claims of major sponsors is conspicuous only by its absence on network news shows. We asked Alvin Perlmutter, producer of HBO's "CR" specials and a former vice president of NBC News, why he thought that was so.

"I think someone could

fairly question some of those judgments about what is news and what isn't news," he said. "We can't escape the fact that commercial television is there to deliver an audience to advertisers, and there is an implied pressure not to get involved in stories like that. Nobody ever says it outright, but once you're in the corporate structure, you become sensitized to subjects like that—you just don't get involved."

**Peak condition.** The amount of sports coverage brought to you by the three commercial-TV networks leveled off significantly in 1979, according to a confidential tally recently completed by the ratings company A.C. Nielsen.

After upping their sports programming more than 90 hours in each of the previous two years (from 1083 hours in 1976, not including the Olympics, to 1175 in 1977 and 1270 in 1978), the networks gave the jocks only 19 additional hours of attention in 1979.

Tennis experienced the most dramatic change, dropping from 85 hours of coverage in 1978 to 59 hours in 1979. Football remained the most popular sport, with 379 hours of air time, five more hours than in 1978. There were 173 hours of baseball, down one hour; 150 hours of basketball, down nine hours; 128 hours of golf, up one hour; and 231 hours of multi-sport anthology shows like *Wide World of Sports*, up 21 hours.

Why did coverage level off? "They reached the saturation point," said an advertising executive. "There are only so many hours in the day, and local stations want to do their own programs on weekends too."

## WASHINGTON

### Steve Weinberg reporting

**Haul aboard.** Ted Turner's 24-hour Cable News Network has

sent ripples, and in some cases tidal waves, through the Washington news bureaus of ABC, CBS and NBC.

CNN went fishing for top news talent in the relatively small pool of bureau executives and correspondents, and succeeded in hauling aboard a sizable catch. Many of the bigger fish came from ABC: bureau chief George Watson, who accepted an equivalent post at CNN; correspondents Bernard Shaw, Bill Zimmerman and Don Farmer; producer David Newman and others.

Watson's move influenced his ABC colleagues, but he insists he didn't "raid" his former employer's ranks. "When you start a new network," he says, "you look for the best people, and it's a rather small industry. It makes sense that many of our people would come from ABC, because that's where I came from. I called very few people at ABC. They called me."

The baits that lured the newsmen were money and the opportunity to broaden their beat. Though CNN lacks the financial resources of the big three, it was nevertheless able to top previous salaries, and it also promised its recruits that they'd do more on the cable network than they could ever hope to do if they stayed where they were. Bernard Shaw, for example, has moved into the new Washington anchor chair.

Watson says Shaw is now earning "what he could have made in a new contract at ABC, plus some earnest money," but one source in the ABC bureau suggests that might be an understatement. "In some cases the salaries are twice as much," says the source. "And you can't offer correspondents a \$50,000 raise without throwing the whole scale out of whack."

However, ABC hasn't been totally passive while CNN has been trawling the Washington

*continued on page 93*

## WHAT'S ON

Some of the noteworthy programs and events that are scheduled for television this month.  
(Check local listings for dates and times in your area.)

## NEWS AND DOCUMENTARIES

**ABC News Closeup.** The lives of three cancer-stricken youngsters are the subject of a one-hour documentary by Oscar- and Emmy-winner John Korty. ABC.

**NBC White Paper.** "Are We Going Broke?" is the ominous title of this 90-minute look at the U.S. economy. NBC.

**The American Game.** It's basketball, and filmmaker Tony Jones has examined it by focusing on two high-school players—a black from Brooklyn and a white from Indiana. Mobil Showcase Network (syndicated).

**Charlie Chaplin: The Little Tramp.** Joel Grey is host of a special on Chaplin's early years. Home Box Office (cable).

**The Greatest Scandals of the Century.** Seaminess and corruption, from Harry K. Thaw's 1907 murder of socialite Stanford White to Britain's Profumo scandal of the '60s. Home Box Office (cable).

## MUSIC

**Pavarotti at Juilliard.** A repeat showing of last January's six-part series in which the famed Italian tenor Luciano Pavarotti instructs students at New York's music school. PBS.

**The Madwoman of Central Park West.** Phyllis Newman in a made-for-TV version of her one-woman off-Broadway show. Mobil Showcase Network (syndicated).

**Linda Ronstadt in Concert.** America's rock sweetheart in a performance taped in Los Angeles. Home Box Office (cable).

## SPECIAL EVENTS

**The 1980 Democratic National Convention.** Coverage from New York's Madison Square Garden is broadcast on the three commercial networks and PBS on Aug. 11-14. Cable News Network will provide occasional coverage during its programming day.

## SPORTS

**Friday Night Fights.** Shades of Don Dunphy! Dick Enberg, Dr. Ferdie Pacheco and welterweight superstar Sugar Ray Leonard are the hosts for the return of a '50s sports institution on Aug. 1, 8 and 22. NBC.

**Professional Football.** The pre-season kicks off on Aug. 2 with the Hall of Fame game between the Green Bay Packers and San Diego Chargers. ABC.

**U.S. Open Tennis.** Coverage from Flushing Meadow, N.Y., begins Aug. 26 with nightly updates at 11:30 (ET). There'll be extended coverage on Aug. 30 and 31 beginning at 1 P.M. (ET). CBS.

**Professional Golfers Association Championship.** The final two rounds will be telecast Aug. 9 and 10. ABC.

## DRAMA AND MOVIES

**Dracula.** Frank Langella got his teeth into the title role of this 1979 film version of the horror classic. Showtime (cable).

**Cabaret.** Liza Minnelli and Joel Grey star in Bob Fosse's 1972 movie based on the hit Broadway show. Home Box Office (cable).

**Midway.** Charlton Heston and Henry Fonda star in this 1976 re-creation, shown over two nights, of World War II's pivotal Pacific naval battle. NBC.

**Norma Rae.** Sally Field's 1979 performance as a feisty millworker garnered her an Oscar for Best Actress. Home Box Office (cable).

**The Knowledge.** A British *Taxi*, sort of, from Thames TV, as would-be cabbies attempt to learn the streets of London. Mobil Showcase Network (syndicated).

**The Seduction of Joe Tynan.** Last year's box-office smash, written by and starring Alan Alda, who plays a senator torn between his career, his wife (Barbara Harris) and his mistress (Meryl Streep). Home Box Office (cable).

**Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band.** The Beatles' 1967 album came to life on film in 1978. Showtime (cable).

**Grease.** The 1978 film version based on the long-running Broadway musical, with John Travolta, Olivia Newton-John, Jeff Conaway and Stockard Channing. Showtime (cable).

## COMEDY, VARIETY AND NEW SERIES

**The Best of On Location.** Highlights from Home Box Office's series of in-performance comedy specials include sketches by Robin Williams, Richard Pryor, George Carlin, Steve Martin and David Brenner. Robert Klein is the host. Home Box Office (cable).

**Ed McMahon and Company.** Johnny Carson's second banana gets to tell jokes that would be bleeped from *The Tonight Show* in this pilot for a proposed new variety series. Guests include Phyllis Diller. Showtime (cable).

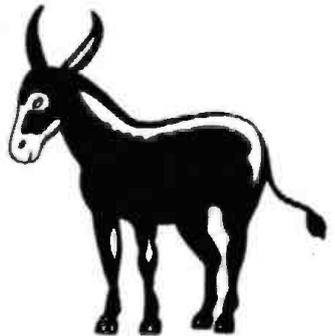
**Ralph Nader: For the People.** The consumer crusader in a series pilot. Showtime (cable).

**What's Up America.** Cable's new monthly answer to NBC's *Real People*. Showtime (cable).

**Texas.** Move over, J.R. Ewing. This new daytime soap opera is set in Houston and revolves around the problems of your everyday oil, land and communications millionaires. Beverlee McKinsey stars. NBC. ■



Luciano Pavarotti: High notes at Juilliard.



Democratic Convention: Political get-together in the Big Apple.

# THE RATINGS RACE

## HE WHO CASTS LAUGHS, LASTS LONGEST

By **MICHAEL DANN**

Since the start of network radio, and later in television, comedy has always been the public's absolute favorite as a programming form.

There have, of course, been times when other forms, such as the Western, the give-away quiz show and the medical drama, have temporarily drawn the largest audiences. But never has anything interrupted the popularity of the situation comedy.

*60 Minutes* was an extraordinary phenomenon this year, in that a series produced by a news department was able to become the top-rated show of the season. This had never happened before.

But the existence of *60 Minutes*—and of its less successful imitator, *20/20*—has not altered American viewers' massive appetite for situation comedy. Nothing contributed more to CBS's overtaking ABC this year than the success of such comedy shows as *M\*A\*S\*H*, *Alice*, *Flo*, *The Jeffersons*, *The Dukes of Hazard*, *WKRP in Cincinnati* and *Archie Bunker's Place*.

There are three major reasons why comedies are so important to network leadership.

First, ratings for the most successful comedies are usually considerably higher than those for hit shows of other kinds.

Second, comedies normally are placed at the start of the evening and, if successful, they act as perfect building blocks for the rest of the night.

And last, no program form lends itself to more spinoffs than the basic situation comedy. To name just a few spin-off examples: from *Alice* came *Flo*; *Benson* came from *Soap*; *Laverne & Shirley* from *Happy Days*; and *Maude* from *All in the Family*.

Nothing helped CBS more over the years—and later ABC—than the ability to create the successful situation comedy. Conversely, nothing hurt NBC's ratings more in recent years than their inability to come up with enough comedy hits to anchor their evenings and to spin off new shows based on characters from previous successes.

The big change that has taken place in situation comedies is that they are no longer built around well-known stars. In the earlier days of television, Danny Thomas, Ozzie and Harriet, Lucille Ball, Fred MacMurray, Robert Young, Doris Day, Ann Sothern, Jackie Gleason and Andy Griffith, to name just a few, were very famous long before they

appeared in a television series.

Today, Carroll O'Connor became well-known as Archie Bunker, Robin Williams as Mork, Bea Arthur as Maude, and Suzanne Somers as Chrissy. All of these people were relatively unknown before they appeared in shows that made them household favorites. In short, in the old days the stars made the shows; today, the shows make the stars.

The accompanying table shows that in the last 20 years a variety of program forms has appeared in the number-one spot each season, but in terms of constant popularity, the situation comedy has been equaled only by the American hamburger. ■



James Arness when *Gunsmoke* was the top gun.



For five years Jean Stapleton's Edith was the empress of ratings.

### TOP-RATED SHOWS: 1960-1980

YEAR	TOP PROGRAM	NET-WORK	RATING	NUMBER OF COMEDIES IN THE TOP 10
1960-61	Gunsmoke	CBS	37.3	4
1961-62	Wagon Train	NBC	32.1	5
1962-63	The Beverly Hillbillies	CBS	36.0	7
1963-64	The Beverly Hillbillies	CBS	39.1	8
1964-65	Bonanza	NBC	36.3	6
1965-66	Bonanza	NBC	31.8	9
1966-67	Bonanza	NBC	29.1	8
1967-68	The Andy Griffith Show	CBS	27.6	7
1968-69	Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In	NBC	31.8	8
1969-70	Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In	NBC	26.3	6
1970-71	Marcus Welby, M.D.	ABC	29.6	2
1971-72	All in the Family	CBS	34.0	5
1972-73	All in the Family	CBS	33.3	5
1973-74	All in the Family	CBS	31.2	6
1974-75	All in the Family	CBS	30.2	8
1975-76	All in the Family	CBS	30.1	6
1976-77	Happy Days	ABC	31.5	4
1977-78	Laverne & Shirley	ABC	31.6	7
1978-79	Laverne & Shirley	ABC	30.5	8
1979-80	60 Minutes	CBS	28.2	7

# SUPER AVILYN:

The future of videotape  
is suddenly very clear.

Super Avilyn is the videotape that helped make six-hour videodecks possible. TDK invented a new magnetic technology to create it. Effortlessly, it overcomes the horrors haunting home video. Problems that are not the fault of the deck, but the fault of the tape. You've seen them. Poor resolution. Dullness. Bleeding colors. Pictures with the jitters. Drop outs.

Inside your videodeck there's a harsh reality. Video heads spin at 1800 rpm. At that speed, poor quality tape sheds a shower of oxide particles into the works. An insidious process that may produce good pictures while damaging your deck. During six hours things get tougher. Tape barely moves at .43 inches per second. More information is

squeezed onto less space. Imperfections get magnified. But Super Avilyn stays super. Its high density particles are polished micron-smooth to cut down friction. Colors stay separate. Brightness and crispness is superb. Pictures are rock steady through hundreds of hours of play.

This much is clear. Now that you know the inside story, you won't judge videotape by its picture. You'll judge it by its future.

 **TDK**  
The Vision of the Future



# PERSPECTIVE

By RICHARD REEVES

## Why Those Political Commercials Are Necessary

**D**avid Broder of The Washington Post is probably bored with being characterized as "the most respected political reporter in the country." But he is, and he's seen a lot in 25 years of following the men and women who aspire to the Presidency of the United States. Mainly, he's seen television revolutionize American politics. The changes, which traumatize college professors and other students of the electoral process, don't really bother him that much.

"Campaigns are not philosophical discussions, despite what the League of Women Voters thinks," he said one Sunday morning during the seemingly endless series of primary elections. "They are not referendums on issues. You are choosing candidates, live human beings. And one of the facilities that you want in a leader is the ability to compress and narrow choices in a way that makes them understandable and accessible to people. Using television to do that is not a distortion of the

process, it is very much the essence of leadership. There's nothing wrong with the discipline that's involved in refining your thought to the point that you can express it in three or four declarative sentences."

Refining, explaining or distorting thought, action and character into 30-second segments is what political commercials are about. Broder and I were talking about that because I was putting together a documentary for ABC News on television and politics. In doing that—spending four months talking to candidates and their managers, journalists and television executives—I was mildly surprised to hear most of them defend commercials.

For one thing, some candidates said, paid commercials were the only way they could get on television. "I had one network..." said Sen. Robert Dole when he was a Republican Presidential candidate, "I think I've had 20 seconds on that network since my campaign started. Some people never see me on television unless it's on a commercial."

For another, candidates and the men who make their commercials said television advertising is more issue-oriented than television news. "Let's

face it," said Douglas Bailey, a partner in Bailey, Deardourff & Associates, Inc., the media consultants to President Gerald Ford's 1976 campaign, "television news concentrates on the horse race. Who's ahead? The candidate has a right to get across the issues and messages he or she wants to get across. That's what commercials do."

**B**ailey's partner, John Deardourff, put it this way: "The candidates, through the use of paid advertising, can communicate exactly what they want to say in the way that they want to say it at the time that they want it to be said.... This is the one certain way that candidates have of reaching voters with the precise message they wish to communicate to them."

The precise messages, of course, do not have to be precisely accurate or nice—the courts have protected duplicity and nastiness in political commercials under the First Amendment. President Carter's commercials this year have concentrated on cozy family scenes and people in the street saying they don't trust Edward Kennedy. Kennedy's early commercials responded, quite foolishly, with scenes of the Sena-



tor as family man, sailing and walking along beaches with his wife and children—probably reminding viewers of the water and beach at Chappaquiddick, which inspired Carter's nasty little messages. The prize for questionable advertising, however, went to a Republican, Ronald Reagan, who did commercials saying he would cut taxes 30 percent, the way John Kennedy did. The problem was that Kennedy didn't quite do that, so Reagan said he never said that, but still continued running commercials saying it for a few days.

**T**he good, the bad and the ugly commercials are made by media consultants—a business that began in 1952 when Rosser Reeves, chairman of the board of the Ted Bates advertising agency, began making commercials for Dwight Eisenhower. Those media folks have a self-interest in paid television. They make a lot of money on it. Robert Squier, a Washington consultant who has worked for Hubert Humphrey and Jimmy Carter, charges a flat fee of \$50,000 to work on a campaign and then collects an agency share of 15 percent of the total television buy. That time buy in a Presidential election can be more than \$20 million, so 15 percent adds up.

"My job is to take the candidates at their best and communicate that to the public," Squier said. We were talking on camera at the time and I said that, in an earlier interview, Frank Reynolds of ABC had said he "shuddered" at the role media consultants were playing in Presidential politics. Squier looked at my producers and crew—seven people and attendant equipment—and said: "I think that candidates running for public office deserve the best professional advice they can possibly get to communicate to the most important medium they have to communicate through, which is television. Just like Frank Reynolds. Frank Reynolds didn't just walk in off the street. Frank Reynolds is a professional in his job. He has people behind him who are professionals. You didn't just walk in here off the street. You have a whole room of professionals here working on this broadcast. I think that a politician has the same right."

He's right. If political commercials are as evil as some think, they are a nec-

essary evil. Candidates for the highest office—and the lowest office—have the right to say what they want to say, the way they want to say it. Television news producers have the right and obligation to analyze, to dissect, to criticize, to report the story as they see it, not as the newsmaker sees it. And, according to TV executives, the candidates' undiluted, unedited, unanalyzed messages can't be transmitted free on other programs because of Federal equal-time and fairness regulations.

"All the networks have said over and over again that they're willing to give free time to the major candidates in various formats—debates, press interviews, documentaries, or one-on-one interviews in depth—but they can't under Section 315 [the Equal Time Rule]," said Richard Salant, vice chairman of NBC and former president of CBS News. "We always think of it as a two-party system, and it's nothing of the kind. Under Section 315, anybody who is running any kind of campaign is eligible...so you can give time to a Republican and Democratic candidate and the leading third-party independent candidate, but then you've got to give it to the pig farmer and the Prohibitionist Party....I don't think we can ever get rid of those [paid commercials] ... and I think that's unfortunate."

**A**ll things considered, it is unfortunate. Candidates have to pay about a third of their campaign budgets—some of it taxpayers' money, in the form of Federal matching funds—to some of the most profitable corporations in the world for the privilege of telling the Nation why they want to be its leader. (How important are those tens of millions of dollars to the networks? "Chicken feed," said William Leonard, the president of CBS News. True, but local television stations love the extra revenue they get from political commercials.) It's also unfortunate that sometimes they abuse that privilege—really a right under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution—with commercials that are often deceptive or silly.

There must be a better way to run a democracy. Both sides, politics and television, complain about it, like the weather, but no one I talked with seemed sure what to do about it. ●

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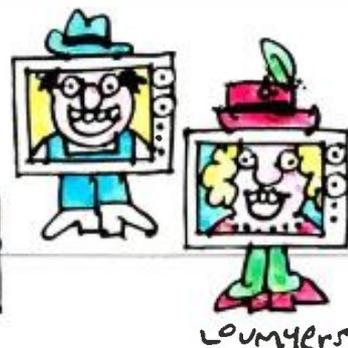
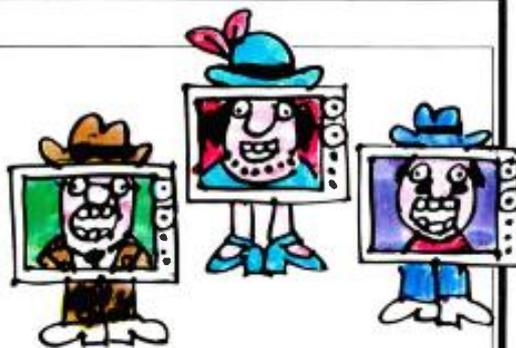
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# Unreal People

By CYRA McFADDEN



**A** populist spirit is alive in the land. Down with the politicians. Up with rent control. Fie on Big Oil, the Fed and the fat-cat bureaucrats. And while we're at it, how about some *real* people on television for a change?

Now comes populist prime-time programming, in the form of the NBC series *Real People* and its ABC imitator *That's Incredible!* Just plain folks like you and me, babe, and the drama of our ordinary, unsung lives—except that both shows lean heavily to the grotesque. If you're hoping *Real People* will feature your old mother in the convalescent home, forget it—unless she happens to feed live baby rabbits to her Venus' flytraps.

Both shows do sometimes feature people whose accomplishments roundly deserve recognition. *Real People* did a segment on The Lonely Eagles, the heroic black pilots of the Army Air Corps during World War II. *That's Incredible!*, despite a greater penchant for the freaky, recently featured a film about a courageous young woman, a blind track star. Because both juxtapose such people with those whose exploits are trivial, hokey or downright insane, however—The Lonely Eagles in the same hour with "Spaceship Ruthie," who believes, accurately, that she is from outer space—such segments don't have much impact nor do they carry much weight.

*That's Incredible!* followed its feature about the blind woman athlete with one of a Hollywood stuntman vaulting a row of vans on his motorcycle. "One mistake of a split second in timing could easily mean disaster!" intoned host John Davidson, in the style of a carnival pitchman. The film rolled, the cycle exploded in midair, the stuntman did a neat tuck-and-roll onto waiting bales of raffia, and we were back in the world of show biz, where what you see

is not what you get and where even courage may be just another scam.

What we have here is a failure of faith. Real people, the three-ring-circus formats of these shows tell us, are BORiiiiinnngggg— not half as entertaining as toilet-trained cats, or, on a recent *That's Incredible!*, carnivorous plants. (Your mother and her Venus' flytraps may still make the big time.) In fairness, the producers may be right, at least in terms of what television does well and what it does badly. Give me *One Life to Live* any day over that deadly documentary some years ago on the real-life Loud family.

**T**he problem seems to be that in front of TV cameras, real people cease to be real. Self-consciousness sets in, or the ham in us, or unconscious imitation of the slickees we see on the screen—personalities rather than people. On *Real People*, audience members announce "We'll be right back!" or "That's it for tonight, folks!" Facing the cameras, they display the same bright-eyed, shiny smiles as the show's four hosts—John Barbour, Skip Stephenson, Sarah Purcell and Byron Allen—and the same incurable cuteness. Why is it that when you put a microphone in someone's hand, he turns into a Las Vegas lounge act?

For a while Fran Tarkenton was a refreshing nonslick presence as one of the three hosts on *That's Incredible!* (The others, Cathy Lee Crosby and John Davidson, are Purcell/Barbour clones.) All too soon Tarkenton learned that TV performer's trick of opening his eyes very, very wide and smiling like a finalist for Miss Processed Cheese.

I ask you: have we all been sitting too close to our sets?

On *The Dick Cavett Show* earlier this year, the brilliant British writer Frederic Raphael discussed what anthropologists might call "Television Man," the

way we've all become creatures of the medium. Look what's happened, Raphael said—I'm paraphrasing here—to the quality of man-in-the-street interviews. Once you stopped somebody, pointed a camera at him and asked, "What do you think we ought to do about the hostages?" The man would shuffle his feet, look uneasily into the middle distance and say something like, "Well...uh...it's really terrible. We should, uh, do something."

Turn the camera on the same man-in-the-street these days, and you'll get a professional performance and a State Department position paper: "I'm glad you asked me that. Point one, under our existing reciprocal trade agreements, we should demand the cooperation of our Common Market allies in boycotting all commodities trade to Iran. Point two...."

In a personal appearance in California some time later, Cavett joked that Raphael was right. "I think we have all been transistorized. In fact, I noticed a little Japanese man working on me just the other day."

**M**eanwhile populist programming marches on. This month NBC unleashes another example of the genre, *Speak Up America*, described by critic Terrence O'Flaherty as "a random interview show for the 'mad-as-hell' generation." With co-host Marjoe Gortner, whose revival-tent background gave the series' two pilot programs evangelistic overtones, *Speak Up* will feature us just-plain-folks sounding off on what's wrong with this great Nation of ours.

"I say the politicians have been taxing us long enough. Why don't we tax the politicians?" announced a man to whom Gortner passed the sacred torch, a portable microphone. To wild applause from the pilot-program audience, the man smiled an unnaturally wide-eyed smile into the camera. I thought for a moment he was going to launch into "My Way."

You've got to hand it to those Japanese. What they can do with transistors is *incredible!* ■

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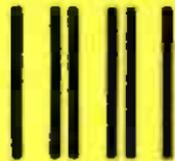
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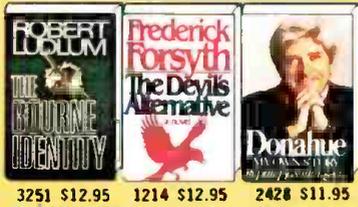
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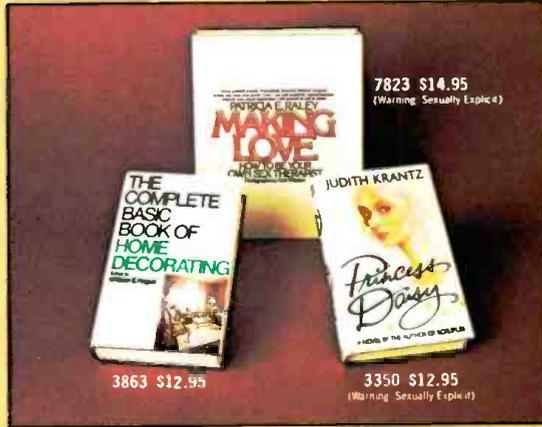
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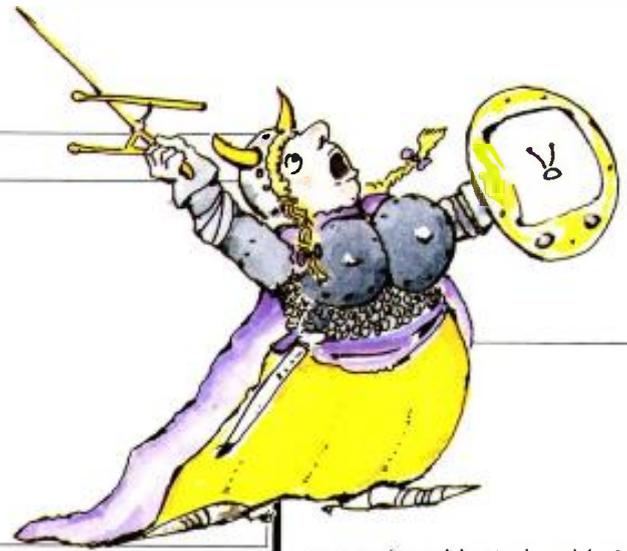
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# Culture Is Coming

By SETH GOLDSTEIN



A high-quality cultural channel on cable has been dreamed of and discussed for a long time, and now it looks as if the dream will be realized—twice over.

The arts may make their first incursion from across the Canadian border. A Toronto company, Lively Arts Market Builders (LAMB) wants to start a limited service next spring that would bring international ballet, opera and music to cable subscribers in Canada—and to U.S. viewers too, if a deal can be struck. C-Channel, as it is called, might swap programming with PBS, which is known to be interested in the cable and pay-TV marketplace. If LAMB gets the go-ahead from the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission, the company will spend \$5.5 million on programming in the first year—75 percent on Canadian productions, the rest on acquisitions from abroad.

The Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City is one obvious source, and there is ample material already on tape in Europe, South Africa and elsewhere, according to LAMB president Edgar Cowan.

An even more ambitious scheme—one spawned by the Carnegie Corporation of New York—is called PACE: Performing Arts Culture and Entertainment. This would be a full-scale cultural cable channel operated by a nonprofit organization that would be independent of both PBS and cable-system operators. It would offer 210 hours per month of music, theater, foreign movies, opera, ballet, documentaries and arts-magazine programs.

According to Carnegie, PACE could break even with a mere 750,000 subscribers, each paying \$9 a month for the service. An audience of this size might be achieved in three or four

years. A total budget for the first year is projected at \$23.3 million.

The Carnegie Commission outlined its plan in a report published in May, "Keeping PACE with the New Television." The authors acknowledge that PACE would be "programming for an elite with specialized tastes," but claim that, in the long run, the service would be paid for by its subscribers. PACE would also justify its existence by providing a new source of programming for PBS.

Will it happen? Almost certainly, even if under a different name and different auspices. Commercial interests will move quickly into the cultural vacuum if the nonprofit power brokers fail to act. Says "Keeping PACE" coauthor Sheila Mahony: "There's no question that others can do it."

## Breaking Out in Spots

The commercials you thought you left behind when you migrated to pay-TV may well be following in the next boat.

There is nothing to prevent advertising from being introduced except the program suppliers' belief that subscribers don't want them. But then there are the pressures of the marketplace: the cost of all programming is on the rise and ads might be a means of avoiding a hike in the monthly subscribers' fee.

Major advertising agencies such as Young & Rubicam already are pushing for commercial time, arguing that cable gives them the freedom to break loose from the conventional 30-second spot. They are talking about several minutes between movies, say, or briefer breaks during intermissions.

The agencies and the audience-measuring services are thinking alike. Video Probe Index, a New York-based company now working with Arbitron

on a major cable study, told a National Cable Television Association audience that pay-TV's "memorability factor" made it a likely candidate for advertising. VPI president Robert Schultz said a survey of 150 New York-area households indicated that 45 percent approved of the idea of ads between shows and 35 percent during intermissions.

Cablevision, a system operator on Long Island, has taken the plunge. It began offering spot time to local and national sponsors—airlines and car dealers among them—on a regional service called Sportschannel. Television, says Cablevision president Charles Dolan, has conditioned viewers to expect interruptions.

## Look Who's Here!

When the networks enter cable, cable will have arrived, everyone said. Well, cable has arrived.

The biggest splash was made a couple of months ago with the formation of CBS Cable. This happened only days after Chairman William Paley forced the resignation of President John Backe, in part—say insiders—because Backe oversold the cable project to skittish network affiliates.

CBS plans to acquire and distribute entertainment and informational programs as part of an advertiser-supported basic-cable package. Satellite distribution is, of course, the marketing key. But which satellite? The network has leased a transponder on Western Union's Westar bird, which carries none of the major cable program services at present. If the venture is to succeed, CBS must find a way of convincing more cable operators to buy a second earth station.

CBS will find itself lined up against a familiar competitor in its new venture. ABC Video Enterprises is interested in cable as well as in cassettes and discs. ●

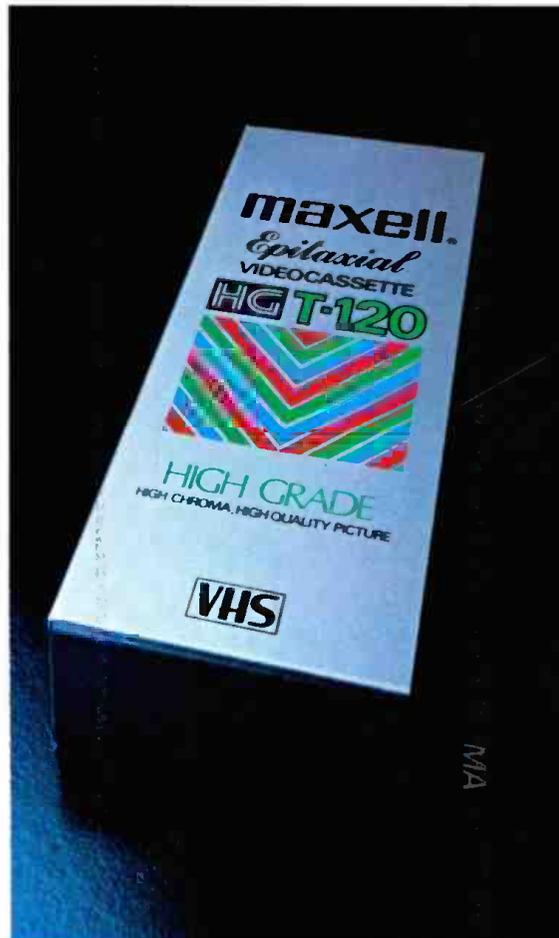
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# Q&A

CAROL BURNETT

Though she is now concentrating more on the stage and screen, Carol Burnett claims that TV is still her first love. "Television is the Nation's most powerful medium," she explains, "and I found that out very early in my career. When I appeared on Garry Moore's show in 1959, I did the opening number from [the Broadway show] 'Once upon a Mattress'—and that musical ran for a year on the strength of that appearance."

Born in San Antonio, Texas, on April 26, 1933, Burnett and her family moved to Los Angeles when she was 8 years old. After graduating from Hollywood High she went to UCLA where she majored in theater arts. Burnett came to New York City in 1954 hoping to become Broadway's successor to Ethel Merman. "I was a musical-comedy performer with a very loud voice," she remembers. "At that point my goal was the stage, not TV."

Five years later, she landed the lead in "Once upon a Mattress" and appearances on *The Garry Moore Show* led to her becoming a regular on his program that same year. Eight years later, she had her own show.

As the star of the weekly *The Carol Burnett Show*, Burnett and her crew of zanies—such costars as Harvey Korman, Vicki Lawrence, Lyle Waggoner and Tim Conway—delivered some of TV's funniest spoofs of virtually any subject you might care to name. Burnett's own comic creations ranged from a softhearted charwoman to the mordantly memorable Eunice. Her ability to burlesque screen stars resulted in sendups of everyone from Rita Hayworth and Joan Crawford to Farrah Fawcett and Ali MacGraw that are still amusing audiences as the show wends its way on syndicated reruns throughout the Nation.

When Burnett ended her series, she may have escaped the grind of weekly TV, but she's maintained a monumental work schedule. In the past 18 months alone she starred in TV's award-winning movie "Friendly Fire"; acted in a Robert Altman film, "Health"; worked with Alan Alda in the recently completed movie "The Four Seasons";



## Remembering the Trials and Errors

The versatile star looks back on roles she'd like to have played a lot differently—as an actress and mother

did a successful four-time summer of '79 reprise of her series for ABC; and earlier had made stage appearances in Los Angeles's Huntington Hartford Theater in "Plaza Suite," "I Do! I Do!" and "Same Time, Next Year."

To talk with this multifaceted performer, PANORAMA sent contributing editor Lawrence Linderman to meet with Carol Burnett at her home in Beverly Hills. Their edited conversation:

**PANORAMA:** *It's now been almost two years since you discontinued your TV show. Do you ever miss it?*

**BURNETT:** No, and I find that I actually like the uncertainty of what I'm doing,

probably because I had 11 years of certainty. That isn't *quite* true, because we were never certain we'd be picked up for another season. I suppose that I worried about my decision to cancel the show for about the first three weeks after I made it. But then, all of a sudden my phone started ringing and things started happening, and I knew I'd still be working and that I hadn't been put out to pasture.

**PANORAMA:** *How long had you been planning to end the show?*

**BURNETT:** I only got definite about it halfway through our final year. At that point I talked to Beverly Sills, who's a real good friend of mine, and I asked her how she felt when she was going from one work thing to another. Beverly said, "I have a ring that my husband gave me with an inscription that reads 'I've done that already.'"

I'd done way over 2000 sketches on the show, and I didn't want to keep feeding off myself. I felt it was time to do other things. Before that, the only time I'd embraced the idea of stopping was during our fifth season. I remember that our writers weren't coming up with sketches that Harvey Korman and I found challenging to do, and we both felt we were starting to outgrow the show's material. Which certainly can happen. There's nothing harder than being a writer for a comedy-variety show, because you're not writing for the same characters every week. Well, we went through a lot of writers that fifth year, but we never got the combination that we wanted. So I really thought about quitting, but then I got a second wind and changed my mind—and I'm glad I did, because I think we all would have really missed not doing the show. The following season we got several new writers, and we developed new characters and new ways of doing things. I stopped doing some of the tried-and-true characters I felt safe with. For instance, I dropped Zelda, the nagging housewife, who by then was giving *me* a headache. I think we got more daring, and I also found

myself going through a kind of metamorphosis.

**PANORAMA:** *In what sense?*

**BURNETT:** I got more adult about my comedy. I didn't really plan it, but I just became less dependent on mugging or crossing my eyes to get a laugh. I started searching for the truth in a sketch, and there is always a truth in every sketch, even if it's one in which you get hit with a pie in the face. I stopped trying to act silly, and gradually I became more involved in what my characters would do in given situations. That hadn't been true up to then, and after it happened the sketches became much better. I really cringe when I look back at some of the things I did during the show's first five years. I often relied on making a funny face or taking something out of context to get a laugh, and that's because I was scared. I just didn't trust myself enough as an actress. I also was putting myself down during the show's question-and-answer segment. Anyway, I finally stopped doing those things.

**PANORAMA:** *Why did you do them in the first place?*

**BURNETT:** Well, before we moved to Los Angeles I grew up in Texas at a time when a little girl was supposed to be a little lady, which meant she wasn't supposed to be funny or have a sense of humor. Whereas a little boy could cut up and everybody would say, "My, my, isn't he a *caution*?" — which meant he was a mischievous little dickens. Also, I never thought of myself as particularly attractive, and the best defense for that was to point out my own faults before anyone else had a chance to, and that way no one could hurt my feelings. Eventually that carried over into my professional life, and I didn't have to go to psychiatrists to figure it out. But I never really verbalized it until after I saw I could get laughs without making fun of myself.

**PANORAMA:** *Was it difficult for you to*

*put an end to that kind of self-deprecating humor?*

**BURNETT:** No, and that's probably because I didn't really plan to — it just kind of happened after that fifth season. I got new characters and then we started doing "The Family" — Eunice and Mama and Ed — which was a gold mine for us. You know, Vicki Lawrence was only 26 when she first began doing Mama, and that took a consummate young character actress. We all still

●●During the show's first five years, I often relied on making a funny face or taking something out of context to get a laugh because I was scared.●●

want to get into those characters more deeply, and I really want to get my teeth into Eunice and take the time to explore what's wrong with her, and what makes her funny and what makes her sad. We're going to do it, too: Dick Claire and Jenna McMahon, who created "The Family," are writing a two-hour show about those characters and we're going to tape it as a TV special.

**PANORAMA:** *Did your show become tedious to do at any point?*

**BURNETT:** No, it never really did. I don't want this to sound as if I'm Miss Goody Two-shoes, but I was working with people who were fun to be with, who were professional and who didn't present any problems. When we first started out, I'd seen Harvey Korman on *The Danny Kaye Show*, and I thought he was the best sketch actor since the days of Sid Caesar and Carl Reiner, so we got him as soon as we could. I found

Vicki Lawrence when she was graduating from high school and she sent me a fan letter and her photo. We'd been looking for someone to play my kid sister in a particular segment of the show, and Vicki looked more like me at 17 than I did at 17. She was a diamond in the rough and really emerged after about five years on the show. Lyle Waggoner — I just *love* Lyle — he stayed with us for all but our last four seasons. He was able to kid himself a lot and he's got a terrific sense of humor, but he finally decided to leave rather than just be a sex-symbol stick figure. And I'd known Tim Conway since the days when he'd been a guest on *The Garry Moore Show*. When he started coming on our show as a guest, I couldn't get enough of him and neither could our audience. It finally occurred to us to ask him back every week, and that led to one of the happiest times on the show. Tim brought us new life and new characters, and boosted us a whole lot. That's why I think our ninth season was our best. We'd really developed into a well-oiled machine by then, and we had the show's best combination of cast and writers.

**PANORAMA:** *Conway's CBS variety show has logged some rather shaky ratings, and this fall is being cut back from an hour to 30 minutes. Does that indicate that his show's future will probably be short-lived?*

**BURNETT:** Not at all. I think that's a very smart move, because it means you're going to see more of Tim. He's not going to have to service his guests, which is often a problem on comedy-variety shows. Anytime you get a guest, unless they have a hit record, they want to do a sketch. They shouldn't.

**PANORAMA:** *Are variety shows a dying form? Will they go the way of the cowboy series on TV?*

**BURNETT:** No, I don't really see that happening. I think that right now, the people who are doing them haven't

been trained. You can find a lot of good stand-up comics, but there's an art to sketch-playing, and it won't come to them unless they train at places like the Second City in Chicago. If you do a comedy-variety show, then you have to be a sketch artist—you have to be a Sid

my manager was saying, "Why don't you do this film and that film?," but he was really thinking about all the money *he* could get. The other thing was that I was just learning about television. What better position could I have than to be second banana to Garry, a man

*to be doing so many films and so little TV?*

**BURNETT:** Probably because I've been offered a lot of film roles and I find it hard to say no because of the people I've been asked to work with. And there are just so many TV specials to do, so I'm doing less television.

**PANORAMA:** *What kind of work schedule would you like to keep on an annual basis?*

**BURNETT:** I'd like to start with four variety shows a year in which we get my gang back together. We did that last summer for ABC and the network wanted us back again this year, but we couldn't get together. Tim's doing a movie and is also with CBS. But CBS is going to allow Tim to do three guest shots, so next summer, hopefully, I'll do three variety specials—and Mr. Conway will be a guest on all of them. That would be a combination summer vacation and class reunion.

I'd also like to do a TV-musical special a year and one good movie for TV. For the rest of the year, I'd like to do a big-screen movie and three or four weeks of theater. That would be the progression. I recently finished a movie called "Health" and I've just started another one. I said yes to director Robert Altman because I really enjoyed working with him in "A Wedding," and he wanted me to play a political idealist in "Health," so I did it. The movie I'm working on now is a comedy film called "Chu Chu and the Philly Flash," in which I play an awful dance instructor who's flamboyant and a con, and who thinks she's the most glamorous person in the world. If I seem to be concentrating a little heavily on movies right now, it's probably because I'm the least facile in films.

**PANORAMA:** *What have you discovered about yourself as a movie actress?*

**BURNETT:** The first thing I realized is that I'm in awe of movies, but the more I do, the less awe I'm in. I just wasn't used to it, because it wasn't my turf. I'm used to TV—working quickly and in front of an audience. My first real goof was that I thought directors would tell me how to make every move, so I didn't offer any suggestions. And therefore I was quite dull in "Pete 'n Til-



●● If you do a comedy-variety show, you have to wear that costume and be that character. ●●

Caesar. You have to wear that costume and be that character. A lot of people don't want to spend the time it takes to do that. And even, if they spend the time, they don't know what they're doing because they haven't paid their dues. What will happen, I guess, is that variety on television will temporarily disappear. But, in a few years, someone who's paid his dues—who's learned how to be a sketch artist—will come up and all of a sudden we'll have a new hit variety show.

**PANORAMA:** *Saturday Night Live fits the description you've just given us, yet it's evident that performers like Chevy Chase, John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd have been far more interested in the greener fields of movies. Are they wrong?*

**BURNETT:** Well, that remains to be seen, but it appears to me that they've made career decisions based on money. Of course, I don't know if they're talked into it or not, because that almost happened to me. My manager wanted me to leave *The Garry Moore Show* after I'd been on for about a year because I could have had the world, as far as money goes. I stayed with Garry for two more seasons because I realized a couple of things. First,

who was so generous that he let me do just about everything on his show? I wasn't starving and I could pay my rent, so I didn't see why I should run out when I hadn't yet learned enough.

**PANORAMA:** *Don't you think it's difficult for young performers to turn down big money to play big roles in big movies?*

**BURNETT:** It *is* difficult. It's also a matter of keeping your feet on the ground and your head on your shoulders. If anybody wants some advice, here it is: Don't be in such a big hurry. Let the audience get to know you and love you before you leave to do other things. That's why I think Gilda Radner's been the brightest one there [on *Saturday Night Live*]. She's been honing her craft, she's gone out and *done* other things, and then she's brought it all back to the show. And now Gilda's got these characters that everyone's in love with, and maybe she found some of them during her fourth or fifth years on the show; she might not have had them if she left after the second or third year. That's a very bright young woman, and a very talented one, as well.

**PANORAMA:** *Then why do you seem*

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lie." I'd like to do it completely over again, because I didn't give Walter Matthau anything to bounce off. I felt that the character I played went just so far, and that was it. I should have been looser in the part. That's why I think I was able to do my best film work in "A Wedding." Bob Altman gives you great confidence in yourself, and you're not afraid to stick your neck out.

**PANORAMA:** *Does it surprise you at all to find yourself building a movie career?*

**BURNETT:** Well, I started thinking about acting around 10 years ago, when I began doing plays during my break from the TV series. I actually started out in school as an actress who did comedy, as opposed to being a comic. To me, a comic is a person who can stand on-stage and deliver a monologue. I could never do that. Still can't.

**PANORAMA:** *One of the high points of your comic acting has been your ability to spoof Hollywood glamour queens. Do you ever have an urge to play one of those roles straight?*

**BURNETT:** No, because I don't think anyone would buy me as a serious *femme fatale*. I wouldn't, either. Unless there was comedy involved, I don't think I could ever believe myself in that kind of role. It was different, though, when I was a child growing up near Hollywood. I'd pretend to be Rita Hayworth, Lana Turner, Bette Davis—I really thought I could look, move and sound like them. I still remember when I first saw "Mildred Pierce," and believe me, I never dreamed that one day I'd wind up spoofing that film in front of the Nation. But if that's the only way I could be Joan Crawford, well, by gosh, wasn't that terrific? And that's really how I felt.

**PANORAMA:** *Have those movie send-ups been difficult to do?*

**BURNETT:** In a lot of ways no, because by the time I started doing them the movies themselves had a kind of nostalgia that was campy. Those 30-year-old Betty Grable-Dan Dailey, Alice Faye-Tyrone Power, Betty Grable-Victor Mature 20th Century-Fox musicals often turn out to be serious tear-jerkers with a show-business backdrop—soap operas, really. A typical plot will have



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the couple as a show-business team and Betty Grable, say, will suddenly be picked to star in the Ziegfeld Follies. Well, Dan Dailey or Victor Mature will then become an alcoholic and run around trying to peddle his poor songs. Betty will always stay in love with him, but he stays away because he doesn't want her to wear the pants in the family. You take that plot and twist it 85 different ways and you'll still have an old 20th Century-Fox musical. All we had to do was add a bit more tongue-in-cheek humor and it was a spoof. We didn't have to do much at all. We once did a whole hour on "The Dolly Sisters," which was funny as hell, and in places we practically copied the movie word for word, scene for scene. We also did a lot of takeoffs on movies in which people were shot. For instance, we had

scenes from "The Little Foxes" and "The Postman Always Rings Twice" that ended in cartoon deaths. We kidded death a lot, but I think we did it with a kind of humor that I like better than the way that subject is treated on *Saturday Night Live*. They've really turned me off that way.

**PANORAMA:** *Can you be more specific?*

**BURNETT:** Sure, I can. Jill Clayburgh was the host of the show one time and I think she played a social worker at a high school that had a lot of corrupt delinquents. At the end of the sketch, a tough kid—he might have been played by Belushi—killed her and then said something like, "Oh dear, what have I done?" Someone then delivered the punch line: "Don't worry, she was dying of cancer."

Boy, that's reaching—and that's not funny. My God, that disturbed me a whole lot, because I kept thinking what if a cancer patient had watched the show to get a laugh or two?

You know, *Saturday Night Live* has had some marvelously innovative writing, but they seem to have this undercurrent about laughing at certain deaths and also thinking it's very funny to do drugs—and I never cared for that even before our problem with my daughter Carrie. In the old days, if somebody was an alcoholic they were termed a loser and they were to be pitied; and if they died from alcoholism, well, it was a true tragedy. Today, if people do drugs then they're cool, and if they die from an overdose, they're put on a pedestal. I've actually heard kids say "What a way to go," when someone they know or have read about OD's. Obviously, I'm not blaming *Saturday Night Live* for this, although I do blame rock stars who think drugs are cool, and that if you're not snorting or popping pills, you're nowhere.

**PANORAMA:** *How did you react when you discovered that your daughter had a drug problem?*

**BURNETT:** Well, to begin with, my husband, Joe Hamilton, and I were totally uneducated about drugs. I had no idea that Carrie was doing everything but angel dust, LSD and heroin; I just thought she was going through some kind of teen-aged lethargy. When we did find out, the usual hassles took

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place: negotiations, cajoling, threatening, punishing, begging, crying, yelling—and now I’m talking about Joe and *me*. We then took Carrie to doctors to scare the hell out of her, and that didn’t work, and then we sent her to psychologists, and *that* didn’t work. Finally, Joe and I reached bottom before Carrie did, and we took the bull by the horns and said, “OK, we love you enough to let you hate us.”

We sent her to Houston to a drug program we heard about called Palmer Drug Abuse Program—and it took. The other things we tried did not, and I advise other parents not to wait as long as we did. Carrie has been sober for one year now. There’s one point I’d like to stress here: The Government says that 60 percent of high-school seniors are now experimenting with drugs. If you want to know why our schools seem to be turning out kids who can’t read or write, you don’t have to look any further. If something isn’t done, in 10 years or so we’re going to have a nation of rutabagas.

**PANORAMA:** *Do you see any way of turning that around?*

**BURNETT:** Well, the first thing we have to realize is that the problem is rampant—and most parents of teen-agers deny it. Their heads are in the sand like mine was. As far as improving the situation in our schools, I think one approach would be to have recovered teen-aged addicts give classes, because those are the people kids will listen to. And I also think that teachers should let parents know when their kids appear to be stoned.

**PANORAMA:** *How difficult has all this been for you?*

**BURNETT:** For a while, it was hideous. I mean, Carrie’s our *baby*. What really helped me were the parents’ therapy groups I attended, because I’d started to hate her, and that only made me feel guilty. What I actually hated was the chemical inside her—you’re really involved with a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde thing, because the kids are not themselves. It’s like a tumor that you’d move heaven and earth to get rid of. And yet parents allow their kids to do it because they’re scared of their children, as Joe and I were. You start to think that if you put pressure on your child she’ll take 20

pills instead of two, which will be the end for her—and that’s the result of being uneducated. You also can’t fight it if you’re afraid of what your neighbors will think. Well, chances are that your neighbors are going through the same thing with *their* kids.

Anyway, it was tough. I was going through all this with Carrie when I was doing “Friendly Fire” and every day I felt like I was treading water and mud. I did not take up the banner to speak out publicly on this until Carrie showed remarkable progress in her recovery.

**PANORAMA:** *When you did speak out on it, you chose to come forward on television. Why?*

**BURNETT:** That was Carrie’s idea, and I wouldn’t have done it if she didn’t want to talk about it. After she was sober for about five months she said, “Don’t you think this happened to us for a reason? We have a high profile—we can reach a lot of people.”

I said, “Are you really ready to come out of the closet with this?” Carrie said, “Are you?” I told her, “You got it, baby.” We did an entire show with Dinah Shore on a day when the audience was filled with teen-agers. One of Dinah’s guests was a 16-year-old addict who felt it was OK to do drugs. Carrie went on the show and talked to the girl, and she committed herself to the drug program. The last we heard she was doing fine. A young boy in the audience also

committed himself to the program, but from what I hear he didn’t make it. You can only give them the tools with which to work.

**PANORAMA:** *Did you feel at all like Peg Mullen, the woman you played in “Friendly Fire”—that you’d always led a fairly private political life and here you were, suddenly tackling a strong national issue?*

**BURNETT:** No, and I don’t want to give the impression that this is an all-consuming thing. But, on the other hand, I have *not* come forward many times when the subject was political. I always thought, “What if I’m wrong? I could sway a lot of people, and my vote should be private.”

Yet I’ve never been frightened of tackling an issue—and I *like* going after the bad guys. You know why? I’m a Frank Capra fan. I grew up seeing his movies, seeing my favorite actor, James Stewart, fighting the system in “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington,” and watching Gary Cooper do his thing in Capra’s movies. Those films were usually about the little guy against the machinery—and I watched Capra’s movies a hundred times. That’s what my background is, and it left me believing in right winning over wrong. Maybe it’s a totally idealistic thing, but I *do* believe that good will out. But you sure gotta go through a lot of crap before that ever happens. ■



●● We have to realize that the drug problem is rampant—and most parents of teen-agers deny it. ●●

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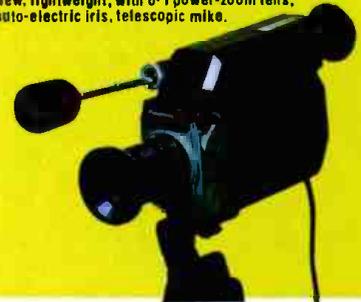
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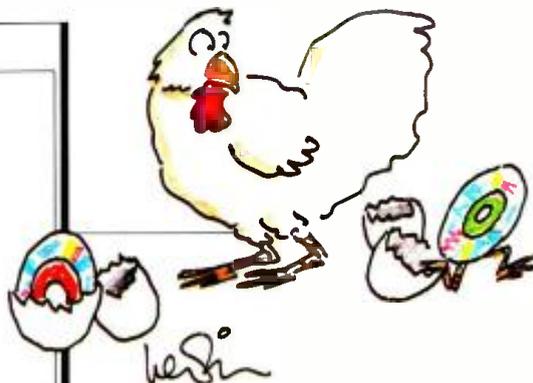
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# Fewer Bugs, More Flicks



By DAVID LACHENBRUCH

**V**ideodisc players, which, at press time, were officially on sale in eight U.S. markets (and unofficially available in many other areas), are generally delighting their owners with their ability to play high-quality video images through television sets. After some initial bugs were worked out, most reports have indicated that the Magnavision laser-optical players are performing excellently.

Of course, since a videodisc machine can only play preprogrammed discs, it's only as good as the programming available. And therein lies the problem — or rather, problems, because there are really two: quantity and quality.

A quick status report on the situation:

Initially, a relatively high percentage of discs simply refused to play, or skipped, or had other flaws. Since each two-sided disc actually consists of two individual discs glued together, there was some mismating. An occasional disc had the same program segment on both sides. One bewildered customer saw the first part of a movie, flipped the disc over and was treated to a demonstration of the 1980 Pontiac (General Motors uses special videodiscs in its showrooms).

Many of these early quality problems have now largely been corrected, and dealers say returns of faulty discs have dropped rapidly. However, DiscoVision Associates, which presses the records, is still coping with one snag: picture quality on the Extended Play, or EP, disc. Optical players are designed to accommodate two different types of discs, you see — standard 30-minute-per-side records and EPs, which contain a whole hour of programming on each side. Originally, it was planned that EPs would be used for movies and standard discs for shorter subjects or edu-

cational and how-to material, which could benefit from the shorter discs' special-effects capabilities (freeze-frame, slow-motion, etc.). It hasn't worked out that way so far. Only two EP discs are now in circulation: "House Calls" and "Deliverance." A trial run of "Animal House" in the EP format was abandoned and the movie was issued on standard discs. But putting a movie on four or five discs is not only quite expensive; it interrupts the viewer's entertainment three or four times for record-changing during the course of the film. MCA, which releases the discs, says the picture problems are being solved and more one-hour discs will be released.

Ah, but what will be on them? Videodisc owners graciously forgive all the early shortcomings of the system — except the shortage of new programs. "How many times can you watch 'Jaws'?" asked one owner. "I saw it in the theater, I saw it on pay-TV and I saw it on network TV. Where are the new programs?"

A good question.

**W**hen videodiscs and players were first introduced in December 1978, MCA issued its first catalogue, containing 202 program selections. So far, only 165 have actually been offered. A new edition, issued in June, contains the same 165 titles plus new ones. The most popular items in the catalogue have been movies — such as "Jaws" 1 and 2, "The Sting," "Animal House," "Deliverance" and "House Calls." But one videodisc dealer who accepts trade-ins on discs (top movies cost \$24.95 new; he'll swap discs for \$4.99) says his customers have now seen all the available records and are clamoring for more.

Now, says MCA, relief is on the way. The company has promised three to six

new titles per month for the rest of the year, and DiscoVision is setting up a second plant to handle them. "The Jerk" and "1941" have already been added to the repertoire, along with "The Electric Horseman," "The Last Married Couple in America," "Coal Miner's Daughter" and "FM," the last of which was listed in the 1978 catalogue but never released. Concert discs in stereophonic sound (to emphasize the superiority of Magnavision's optical-disc system over RCA's upcoming disc system, which has mono sound) were also scheduled for release this summer, including albums by Abba, Olivia Newton-John and Loretta Lynn.

**T**he MCA-label releases will soon be joined by the first videodiscs under other labels. Columbia Pictures hopes to offer up to 10 movies (one title disclosed already is the X-rated "Emmanuelle") by this fall. Pioneer, which is marketing its own videodisc player compatible with Magnavision's, has formed Pioneer Artists to produce and acquire musical programs covering a "broad spectrum of tastes" for videodisc. And another programming consortium, called Optical Programming Associates, has been formed by MCA, North American Philips and Pioneer for creation of special programs designed to take advantage of the optical-disc player's flexibility.

Early next year, RCA is expected to introduce its own SelectaVision videodisc system, which isn't compatible with the Magnavision and Pioneer optical players. RCA vows that SelectaVision's debut will be accompanied by a catalogue of 150 available programs, and that new releases will be added monthly for a total of 300 titles by the end of 1981. Some of the titles will be the same as those in the DiscoVision catalogue, and some will be different.

In short, the videodisc programming famine isn't over yet, but an increasing number of selections should be available for video turntables as the year progresses. ■



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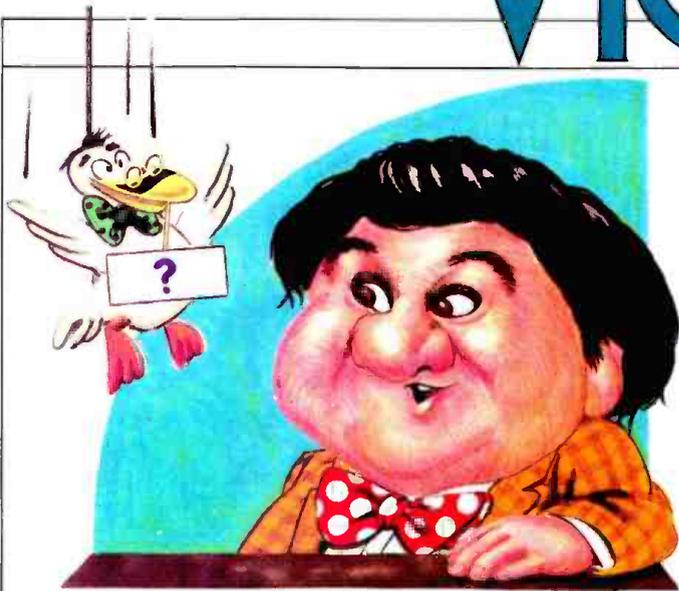
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# PANORAMIC VIEW



## DUCK AMOK

Can Buddy Hackett take the place of Groucho Marx?

Hackett thinks so. And he plans to prove it as the host of *You Bet Your Life*, a new syndicated version of Groucho's old game show.

"Groucho was never gooder than me," boasts Hackett. "He had 20 writers working for him. My show will be all me."

True, the old *You Bet Your Life* was "80 percent scripted," but by a staff of only three writers, according to its producer John Guedel. It was played once a week, and the shows were edited. By contrast, Hackett says he'll do five shows a week, and "they'll be as pure as we can make them. All ad-lib. I'm stubborn and proud and fast enough and good enough."

The new show, which will

make its debut in the fall, will retain the old show's "secret word," and The Duck will still descend from above to reward the contestant who utters it. Hackett himself is not a fan of The Duck—"it's hard enough to work with people"—and had a different proposal: attaching a live duck to the spinning wheel that was, in Groucho's time, used to determine the dollar amount of the winning couple's prize. The duck would be spun until the wheel stopped, at which point a nail would be driven through the duck. The producers didn't think much of this idea. "They must have a duck fetish," explains Hackett, with a big guffaw. In fact, they eliminated the spinning wheel completely.

Hackett also wanted his son Sandy, 23, for the George Fen-

neman role as announcer and foil, but was again overruled; singer Ron Husmann got the job. "He's stiff enough to do it," acknowledges Hackett.

As in the good old days, the guests will be sitting ducks for the host's barbs. "On the pilot we had a 90-pound female weight lifter who got three questions wrong," recalls Hackett. "So I asked her if she had dropped the weights on her head."

Not exactly Groucho's style—but then several of his former associates say the late great genuinely liked his guests. They imply that establishing a similar rapport with the contestants will be Hackett's biggest challenge, followed by the demands of doing five shows a week. "With that kind of schedule, you have to settle a lot [for a lower standard]," says George Fenneman.

The veterans of Groucho's show do not expect the newcomer to cut into the syndication market for *The Best of Groucho*, pointing out that viewers watch because of the host's personality—not because the game itself is so fascinating—and that Hackett's personality isn't much like Groucho's. They unanimously wish Hackett luck.

But Hackett doubts that Groucho himself would be as magnanimous: "He would hate it. If he could get me dead and come back and do the show, he would. He'd like to stick me through Harpo's harp."

## "HELEN DISCOVERS THAT BRUCE DIDN'T REALLY..."

"On *One Life to Live*, Tina throws her body at Nick—and he keeps catching..."

Missed watching your favorite television soap operas? Don't panic. A fairly new RKO Radio Network program, "Soap Opera Update," gives a 90-second summary of the television soaps each weekday morning for addicts who may have missed their fix the previous day.

The show began broadcasting on New York radio station WXLO, a member of the RKO Network, in May of 1979. When Jo Interrante was brought in as RKO's new chief of programming last winter, she tuned in to the 10:30 A.M. broadcast. "It really cracked me up," she laughs. "And I thought it should be heard coast to coast."

Which it now is. More than 17 of RKO's 90 affiliates currently carry "Soap Opera Update," which covers each TV network's soaps on a rotating basis, with a roundup of all three on Fridays.

The format for compiling the show is simple. The writer, Kathy Grant—"with all nine of her eyes glued to the tube," says Interrante—phones in her summary to a WXLO typist, who hands the script to the station's program director, Don Kelly. He takes the script to the network studio, cues up the music, and launches into a brief synopsis of yesterday's stories.

In a pinch, the writer can call for help from a stringer who scans all the soaps every day—her mother.

“If, as many think, 'Information is the new wealth,' then America is far out in front in the race to develop it.”

—James H. Rosenfield, CBS-TV president, at the 65th annual conference of the Audit Bureau of Circulation, New Orleans

“I worked up not long ago a list of examples of literary works on television. I was amazed! Six pages of serious literary works had appeared on television in the past three years. The authors represented ranged from Brontë and Dickens to Flaubert, Dostoevski and Ibsen, to Alex Haley, Hawthorne and Cooper, to Kipling, Michener, Molière, Sandburg, Steinbeck, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Mark Twain and Tennessee Williams.”

—FCC commissioner Abbott Washburn, at a conference of the American Council for Better Broadcasts, Chicago

## SONY GOES ONE BETA

*Bulletin from the great videocassette time-war front: Sony is introducing a new weapon.*

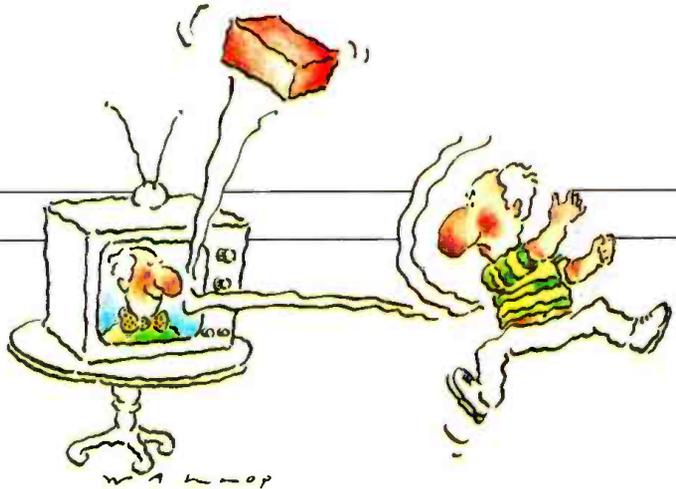
When consumer videocassette recorders first hit the market in late 1975, the VCRs could record only one measly hour. Later, technological advances upped that figure to two, three, four, five and six hours. We've even heard of one manufacturer tinkering with a videocassette that has an eight-hour recording capability.

Now Sony is coming out with a device that will enable all Betamax machines to record up to...are you ready?...20 hours of television on a programmable videocassette autochanger. The book-sized unit, which screws into the top of the VCR, is called the BetaStack AG-300,

and it automatically ejects and loads up to four five-hour videocassettes.

“This should put an end to the videocassette time race,” predicts Joseph Lagore, president of Sony Consumer Products Corp., who notes that the unit was designed primarily for the VCR owner who is away much of the time. When used with the newest Sony Betamax, up to 20 hours of programming can be recorded over a two-week period. One drawback: there is an 18-second recording lag between insertions.

The BetaStack works only with Sony videocassette recorders and is expected to be priced about \$100 when it is made available early this fall. Lagore perceives a small but hardy market of TV junkies who'll pay any price to capture all the programming that's fit to record.



## BRICKS OF WRATH

“Please send me two bricks as soon as possible,” a man wrote in desperation. He had just been to the hospital “for the second time this month” with injuries sustained while kicking in his TV sets.

The letter went to Jim Christ, a waiter and free-lance design artist who also runs a mail-order business called Creative Solutions. Christ sells the TV Brick: a piece of foam rubber in the shape and color of a fireplace brick, which can be hurled in anger—and is guaranteed to bounce off the TV. From Cardiff by the Sea, Cal., he caters to TV viewers who may be “mad as hell” and “not going to take it any more” but who aren't quite ready to smash their sets.

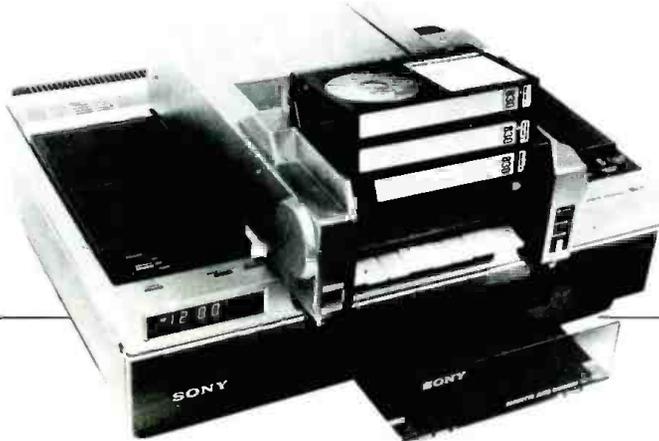
For \$2.99 plus shipping, Christ offers a way to retaliate against anyone, from Howard Cosell to the local weatherman, not to mention the hordes of happy housewives

who keep interrupting shows with news of the latest advances in laundry detergents. The idea for the TV Brick was born out of Christ's own frustration with certain referees during televised football games.

Since starting up Creative Solutions almost two years ago, Christ has sold several thousand TV Bricks, with some orders coming in from as far away as Australia. Direct sales are on the way: Christ is planning to have his product on the shelves of major department stores in time for Christmas shopping. And by surveying his customers, Christ also hopes to start publishing a monthly poll of who on TV gets the brick most often.

Christ thinks 1980, an election year, should be big for TV Brick throwing. With all the candidates showing their faces on the home screen, he says, “This is the year for it.”

—Frank Jacobs



“We have an obligation to frame a legal structure for the broadcasting and communications industries which will assure a continual supply of creative programming and which will also assure orderly and reasonably gentle transition from one technological era to another.”

—Rep. Robert Kastenmeier (D-Wis.), in a speech to the Illinois Association of Broadcasters



## PURER THAN THOU

Despite what some weary PBS watchers might think, those guilt-edged pleas for cash on pledge nights don't mean that support is welcome from just anyone. American labor unions found out PBS could be fussy about funding when they offered financial aid for a fledgling series called *Made in U.S.A.*, which dramatizes the history of the labor movement in this country. Oh, the Public Broadcasting Service was willing to accept a small grant from the

unions, but no big bucks, thank you.

It seems PBS, relaxed somewhat from its former stance of absolute financial purity, still won't allow "party of interest" funders to contribute a majority of a project's backing (on the theory that a diversity of support protects against bias). Why then, some disgruntled unions wanted to know, is it OK for major cor-

porations to give majority funding to shows like conservative economist Milton Friedman's *Free to Choose*?

"It's very important to understand that our underwriting rules are not rules, they're guidelines," replies PBS president Lawrence Grossman. "A judgment is required. Everybody knows what Milton Friedman's views are. People are not going to say that, because of who the underwriters are, Friedman said A instead of B."

His argument does not impress the unions, who, along with others, have pointed out that perhaps *Free to Choose*

found corporate backing precisely because corporations knew Friedman's views and approved of them. "A serious problem," Grossman admits.

Since the controversy first erupted, *Made in U.S.A.* has received a \$500,000 production grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, opening the door for additional union support. But the program's producers are still looking for handouts to make up the \$1.4 million they need to complete a pilot. "A number of people are quick to cry foul," Grossman says, "but when the way is open, they're not rushing to fill the void."

## MINORITY REPORT

If the Federal Communications Commission gives the go-ahead, the slim list of black-owned TV stations will swell to about five times its present size next year—and Booker Wade will have realized a dream.

When Wade was attending Stanford Law School seven years ago, he often thought about forming his own black TV network. Now, he and two other black partners have done just that: their Community Television Network calls for a unique string of stations, targeted at mainly black and Hispanic audiences, to begin broadcasting sometime in 1981.

CTN has already applied to the FCC for permission to construct 10 wholly owned and operated stations from scratch; another four affiliates, to be cooperative ventures with other financial interests, would bring the total to 14. The fact that Wade and his partners, Samuel Cooper and James Winston, all are ex-FCC staffers may help in cutting some red tape.

Wade's original scheme was to offer minority programs day and night, but this proved financially impractical. So CTN decided to generate money by offering a subscription-TV service at night, featuring uncut films and specials for about \$16 a month. Golden West Broadcasters, the company picked to handle the STV operation, also will provide the heart of the financing for the venture, which amounts to a whopping \$60 million.

The three CTN partners are sketchy when discussing exactly what type of fare the network will offer during the day but say it will probably be a mix of programs that have aired on public TV here, as well as independently made productions that have never been shown before. There also will be daily-news and public-affairs programs produced by the CTN staff and black-oriented programs from Caribbean, African and other foreign countries.

If, on the other hand, the FCC denies CTN the construction permits, the number of black-owned stations in the country will remain, for now, at three.

## NINE IS ENOUGH

To all indecisive TV viewers—to those of you who break out in a cold sweat when forced to choose between the sight of Jim Rockford driving his car through a Safeway store owned by Nazi thugs and an aborigine eating hockey pucks during PBS pledge week—take heart. The perfect panacea for your problem has been concocted by Sharp Electronics in the form of a nine-screen color television dubbed Multi-vision.

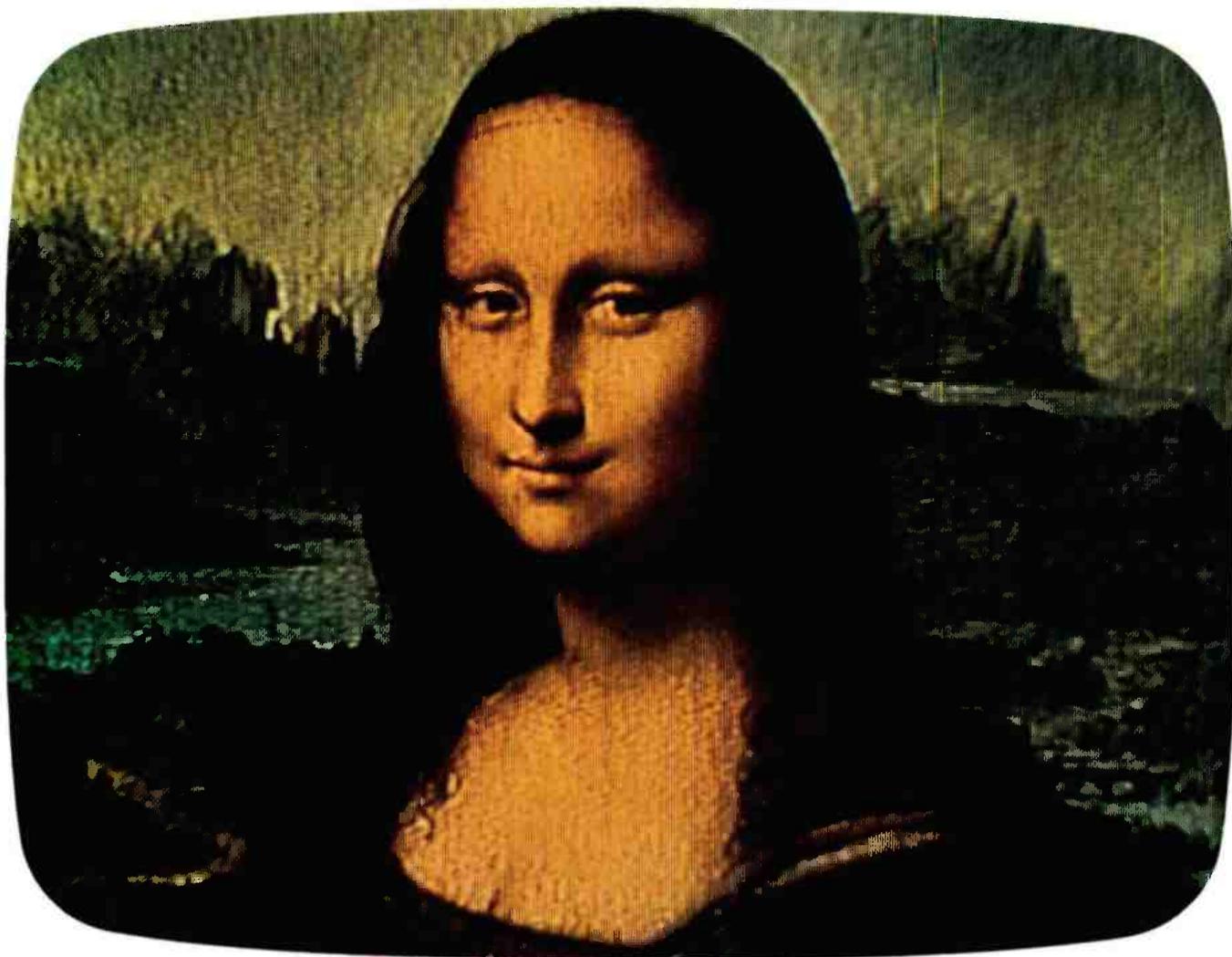
The Multi-vision set resembles a scaled-down version of a network monitoring system. Nine separate TV screens are mounted within one larger (25-inch) screen, ostensibly to give die-hard TV buffs the chance to watch (but not to hear) all their favorite video treats simultaneously. Currently in the developmental stage in Japan, the Multi-vision concept is actually an extension of Sharp's earlier Dual-Vision set, a model that used a small, silent, black-and-white image in one corner of the master screen to afford a view of two television programs at once.

What makes the new proto-

type so special, aside from its inherent eye-crossing abilities, is an attachment that will allow users to dabble in the wonderful world of special effects. Multi-vision's control panel makes it possible to freeze nine consecutive frames of action on its nine screens, creating, in effect, a slide show of sequential still photos.

Unfortunately—or not, as the case may be—there are no current plans to produce the Multi-vision set for sale. It would seem to be yet another of the ingenious engineering accomplishments so dear to Sharp's research-and-development folks, who exhibit no particular compunctions about practicality when it comes to innovation. Says a Sharp spokesperson about Multi-vision: "We have to figure out who'd want one." Presumably viewers with compound eyes. —Ed Naha





# SONY BETA TAPE. PICTURE-PERFECT PICTURES.

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**SONY.**



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## WHO'S HAPPY NOW?

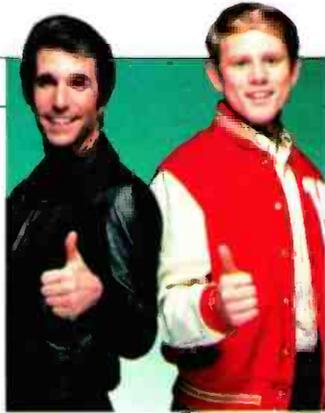
The producers of hit TV comedies, who usually make no money from their shows until they're sold for syndication, should join in a rousing chorus of "Happy Days Are Here Again."

The half-hour comedy series is the most expensive type of rerun fare that a local TV station can buy, and recently the prices have shot skyward. *Three's Company* was sold in New York and Los Angeles for reported prices of \$89,300 per episode, breaking the record of \$61,500 set by *Laverne & Shirley* in Los Angeles. By comparison, sitcoms of the Sixties broke records if they managed to sell for as much as \$15,000 in the same markets. (Prices in the smallest markets remain less than \$1000 per episode.)

The inflationary cycle began with the syndication sale of *Happy Days* in December 1976. The prices paid for the show in New York and Los Angeles—around \$35,000 per episode—more than doubled previous records. The syndicator, Paramount, was the first to break with tradition by not asking for a particular price—stations were given no guidance as to what the maximum price might be, so they desperately hiked their offers, trying to outbid one another.

The *Three's Company* syndicators say they have returned to the practice of establishing a maximum price in most of the markets where they have sold their show. That maximum is higher than ever, however, thanks to the floodgates that were opened by *Happy Days*.

The station owners and managers are not quite so happy as the producers about all this. Anthony Cassara of Golden West Broadcasters describes how syndicators play stations off against each other: "If there were a show about a leper colony in Molo-



kai that was 64th in the ratings, the syndicator would say there's a strong interest in it from another station in your market. In a one-station market, they would say a radio station is interested."

Storer Broadcasting TV Stations division president Kenneth Bagwell detects "signs of price gouging" and suggests that the costs of secondhand comedies could induce stations to broadcast less expensive local programs rather than the same old reruns—a reversal of the usual attitude that local production is too expensive. "Extra dollars are better invested in the news than in the news lead-in," says Bagwell.

The ratings of *Happy Days* reruns have not justified their price, say some local station executives. And despite the record prices paid for *Three's Company*, the show sold at a slower rate than some of the other hit comedies.

On the other hand, *M\*A\*S\*H*—which was syndicated at pre-*Happy Days* prices—is a big hit among station managers. Its low prices and high ratings have established it as one of the best bargains in the syndication market. Its syndicator, 20th Century-Fox, "blew millions by selling it before *Happy Days*," says a rival.

Fox is determined to blow no more millions. When the *M\*A\*S\*H* contracts are renewed, the prices will be higher. How much higher? A Fox official flashes a wide smile: "Let's just say it won't exceed 2000-percent higher."

## WHITE HOUSE VIEW

Do members of the House of Representatives know that President Jimmy Carter doesn't tune in their cable-TV show, C-SPAN? Does the President's fellow Georgian, Ted Turner, care that no one at the White House has been watching the Cable News Network? Does little Amy Carter complain that she's been missing Warner Amex Cable's kidvid channel, Nickelodeon?

Yes, fellow Americans, it's true: The White House does not have cable TV. There's supposed to be an "options paper" in the works to figure out some way of stringing cable through subway tunnels and such to bring the executive mansion up to date—the District of Columbia has not yet franchised a system—but it doesn't seem to be a top priority item. As a White House spokesman put it, "People around here are far too busy to sit around watching television."

People around there are, however, definite news freaks, and some extraordinary steps are taken to ensure that they don't miss anything while stuck in some summit conference or another. To pull in the clearest possible TV picture, an individual antenna is pointed at each local station from atop the Executive Office Building next to the White House; military technicians in the one-room White House video center then use electronic devices to spruce up the

pictures even further. The evening newscasts of ABC, CBS and NBC are all taped and edited into a news composite, which runs on the White House closed-circuit system the following day at 9:30 A.M. and 12:30 P.M. By that time it's old news to the President, though, since he has a printed summary delivered to his office each evening by about 8 P.M.

In addition, tapes are routinely made of the networks' morning news shows and about eight other regularly scheduled national news programs, such as *Washington Week in Review*, *The MacNeil/Lehrer Report* and *Meet the Press*—eliminating the need for a personal Presidential VCR. The video-center technicians also monitor all programming between 6:30 A.M. and 9:00 P.M. just in case there are special reports or bulletins. (Since the President has some clout at the networks, anything missed by these monitors can usually be sent over.)

With such a dream system to use, what a pity one of the Administration's first budget-cutting moves was to reduce the number of TVs officially assigned to the White House complex from the 330 sets used during the Ford Administration to the current 65. Then again, as the press aide insisted, "The Carter family does not watch television for entertainment."

“It's kind of neat to think that there are people in South America and people in Europe that all know these characters—that these puppets, which are just little pieces of cloth or foam rubber, are known and recognized all over the world. But creatively, one thinks in terms of just two or three people sitting in front of a TV set because I think that's the way the whole medium operates.”

—Jim Henson, creator of the Muppets, in the documentary film, *The Link Between Us: Electronics*

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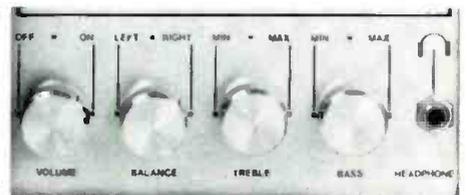
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## POST TIME

The bets are placed—on Private Eye, on Super Quick, on Special Only, on all the other horses in this fifth race at Aqueduct. And they're off! To the cheers of some and the moans of others, Private Eye streaks down the homestretch to cross the finish line first. The board shows \$5.60 to win.

From post parade to payoff, it is a most conventional horse race. Except for one most unconventional element: the track is miles away and all the racing is being watched on a 32-by-24-foot television screen.

There are those who believe that the world's first Teletrack, in New Haven, Conn., heralds the dawn of a new era in electronic gambling. The New York Racing Association, for one, is hoping for regulatory approval of a two-year video-racing experiment in a renovated theater in its own state. And it has been talking with Las Vegas casino-owners about bouncing parimutuel racing by satellite to the gambling capital.

But for now, General Instrument Corp. has a corner on the action and the action is in Connecticut (although Connecticut has no race tracks of its own, it is the only state other than New York and Nevada to have legalized off-track betting). Jack DeVries, chairman of the board of American Totalisator Inc., a subsidiary of General Instru-

ment involved in off-track betting, calls the New Haven setup "the natural introduction of the concept."

The concept became reality last October, when General Instrument began transmitting parimutuel racing live via microwave across state lines from New York to Teletrack—an \$8-million betting theater with 2300 seats, 40 betting windows, a clubhouse restaurant and, most prominent of all, the giant TV screen at center stage. Behind the scenes is the TV control center, which allows for close-ups, stop-action, playback, and even features between races—generic short subjects on, say, grooming or training. Admission costs \$2.40 to the grandstands and \$4.20 for clubhouse patrons. What you see for this price is a selection of races from the various New York tracks: thoroughbreds during the day, trotters and pacers at night.

In the theater's first few months of operation, during the season when racing enthusiasm generally ebbs, Teletrack accounted for about \$26.5 million in off-track betting revenues. Average bets per program totaled about \$120. The company takes its cut and lately, the company says, revenue levels are higher.

While some Teletrack bets are, of course, luckier than others, General Instrument appears to have picked a winner. —F.J.

## A RISKY BUSINESS

In what business can a chipped tooth lead to a \$38,000 insurance claim?

In show business. If the tooth is in the mouth of a photogenic television star, it can delay an entire series.

Television producers, who supervise tight shooting schedules and ever-increasing budgets, cannot afford such delays. So they buy high-stakes insurance policies to protect them against show-stoppers like chipped teeth, fires on the set, collapsed sound stages or a principal actor's personal tragedy—such as a death in the family.

Some shows and stars are bigger risks than others. Asked to describe the safest possible network entertainment show, a broker replied that it would be a star-studded special. "If there's no dearth of guest stars and one of them gets sick, you just go get another one," he explained. The same principle applies to extras and even to stunt men and women—unless a stunt is so intricate that it requires a specialist.

Naturally, action shows—with car chases, helicopter and motorcycle scenes and other potentially accident-prone situations—are more expensive to insure than shows that are tucked safely inside studio sound stages. But no matter where the program is shot, a star's maladies can cost a lot of money in lost time.

When Robert Blake was making *Baretta*, for instance, minor health problems, which were unrelated to his scuffling on the job, cost the studio's insurers "\$25,000 a day on a half-dozen occasions," recalls the adjuster who handled the claims. The money paid for production delays is in addition to the fees paid to the stars by workers' compensation programs or through personal insurance policies.

Producers generally try to work around missing stars by rewriting scenes or by changing their shooting sequence. Sometimes this can drastically reduce the insurance claim, as when Ted Shackelford, a star of *Knots Landing*, broke his arm during filming. "We thought it would run about \$150,000," says the adjuster who handled the claim. "But they rewrote it and shot around him, and they ended up losing less money than their deductible" (which was \$6000). So the insurance company was off the hook.

Then there was Erik Estrada, injured in a motorcycle accident while shooting *CHiPs* last fall. Insurance adjuster Dick Watkins feared that the series would have to be suspended temporarily, involving a loss of at least \$1 million—but the scripts were rewritten so Estrada could appear from his hospital bed. Though the final settlement hasn't been made yet, it will be "substantially less" than Watkins once assumed it would be.

The companies that insure the shows for MGM-TV, which produces *CHiPs*, do not demand a deductible fee—except in the case of Estrada. Why single him out? "Because he's a young man with an active lifestyle," says Watkins. "He skis, he cycles."

It's not just actors who schuss and careen that make writing these policies a risky business for insurance brokers. "You have to understand that these people are artists. They're more emotional than other people," says a leading Hollywood broker. This means a broker must have the knack of distinguishing between an actor who *feels* sick during contract negotiations and one who is physically ill. "That can be tough," the broker sighs. "That's why there are very few of us who do this for a living."

“I think we're going through the golden age of TV right now.”

—Fred Silverman, NBC president, at a National Press Club luncheon, Washington, D.C.

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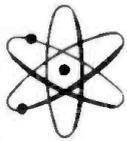
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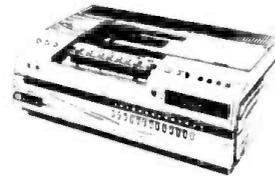
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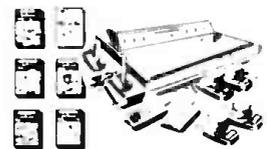
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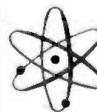
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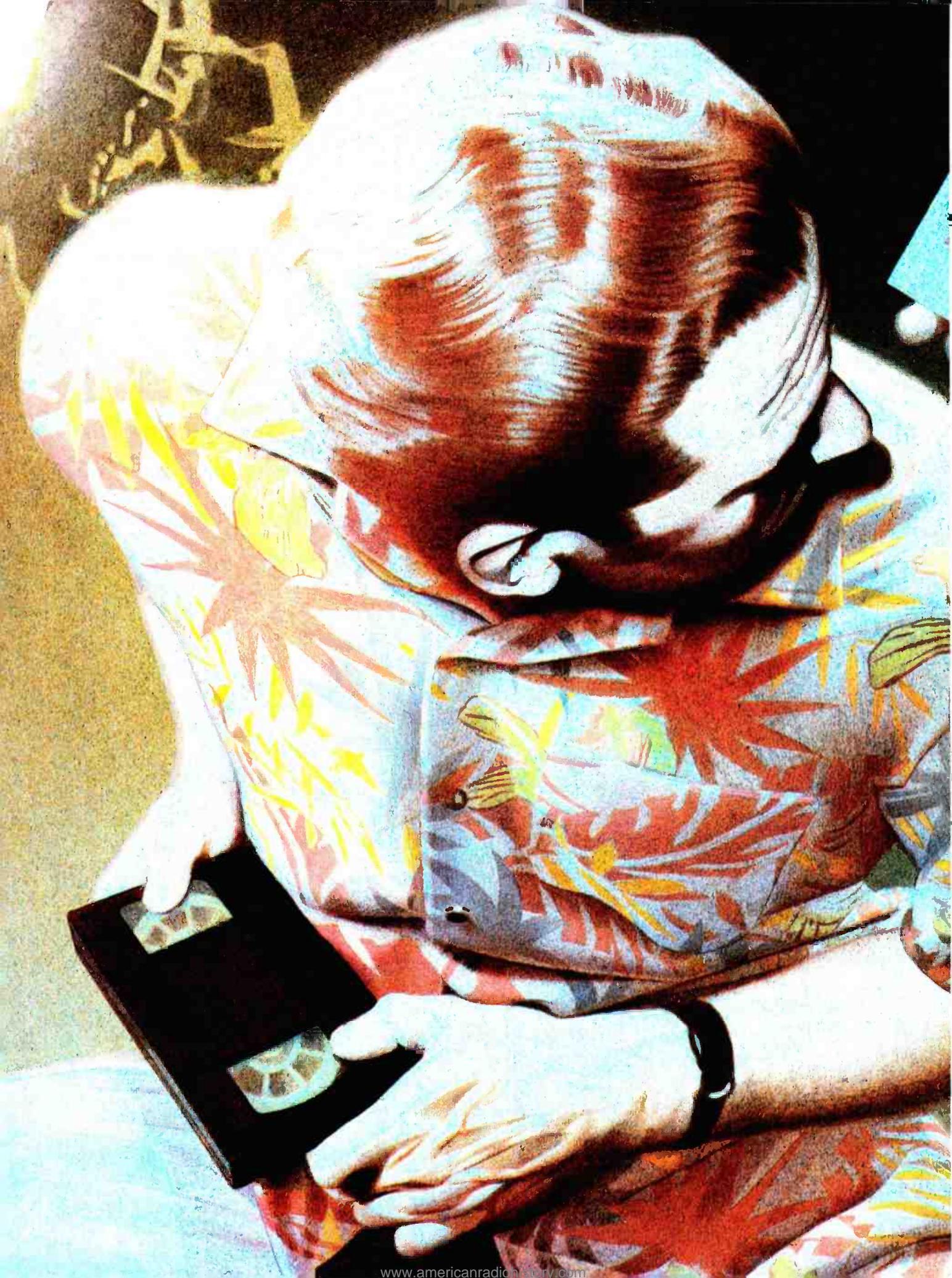
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# “I Knew It Was the Feds the Moment I Drove Up to My Office”

Confessions of a videotape pirate who went straight too late

By BOB NAVINS,  
as told to Howard Polskin

**I**t was a beautiful, sunny morning in Florida the day I got busted by the FBI.

I knew it was the Feds the moment I drove up to my office in a small industrial park outside Orlando. The door was open a little bit and the padlock was missing. In front of the office were six plain-looking late-model cars with big engines and an extra antenna in the rear. Yeah, it was the FBI agents, all right. About eight of them. I felt like running but there was nowhere to run. (I later found out that they had my house staked out, too.) I shrugged my shoulders and shuffled into the small paneled office.

They introduced themselves to me and told me I was under arrest for videotape piracy. That's how my brief successful career as a white-collar bootlegger came to an end. Me, a solid, middle-class businessman with a lovely wife, three kids and a beautiful suburban home. Me, who had never been arrested before. There I was, face to face with the FBI, with my dreams of netting \$2 million a year being carted away along with the crates of video equipment. That's how my story ended. Here's how it began.

It may be difficult to believe, but I'm really just a decent, hard-working guy. To this day I can't believe that I got involved in a criminal activity. I grew up in a small Midwestern town and went to a couple of small Midwestern colleges.

Even though I never got a degree, I was good at anything related to engineering. The stuff that required memorizing—forget it. I never wanted to sit down and memorize anything.

Before I got into videotape piracy, I ran my own business for 17 years. I really don't want to say what the business was because that would tip people off to who I am. Yeah, that's another thing—I'm not using my real name in this story and I've changed a few facts to remain anonymous. There are about 20 guys just like me in southern Florida who were videotape pirates. Any one of them could have written this piece. And I want to make sure that it reads that way.

**A**nway, there I was for 17 years, working my butt off as Mr. Joe American Capitalist. I don't want to give the impression that I ran a conglomerate. But my business did have several offices around the state. In the spring of 1979, someone made me an offer to buy the business. I sold and made a six-figure profit. I had no idea what to do with my life after that and I didn't have any preconceived thoughts about engaging in any type of criminal activity. My pockets and bank account were full of money, my head was full of ideas—but I had nothing to do. So I did what other nouveau riche Floridians would do—I played golf. Seven days a week. Eighteen or 36 holes a day. But a businessman's main function is to

make money. And when you've just made a lot of money, the thing to do is to go out and make more.

**T**hat's one reason I got into trouble. Another is that I love television. As soon as I come home from work, the set is on. I'm a TV freak. I watch anything that's on. It can be any garbage, but I'll watch it. It drives my wife crazy.

When videocassette recorders were made available to the public, I thought, "Great. Now I can see the programs that I sometimes miss." Two years ago I bought my first VCR. My wife thought I was nuts, but, of course, I didn't pay for it. I swapped a guy for it. Very legit. He needed some of my business services. I wanted a VCR. It was a principle that I used a lot as a video pirate.

At the time there were hardly any legal prerecorded videocassettes around. My first experience with bootleg tapes came late in 1978. I bought an illegal copy of "Saturday Night Fever" for myself, the wife and the kids. There was this bootlegger operating out of his house and everyone in my neighborhood had his number. If you needed a videocassette, you just gave him a ring.

When I bought "Saturday Night Fever," I didn't bother to ask him where he got it. I was happy just to get it. Besides, it didn't cost all that much. Just a lousy \$45. However, the quality was crummy. But I ended up making several copies for friends. They brought their VCRs over to my house and we ran off copies. Any idiot can do it.

My neighborhood isn't teeming with crooks, either. It happens to be very exclusive. My house costs about \$175,000. On my block, there are about 18 houses and 15 have videocassette recorders. Everyone wants the latest movies on videocassettes. When I bought the copy of "Saturday Night Fever" and made copies for my neighbors, I never charged them. It was easy. It was fun. I was important to people who wanted movies. That's how it started for me.

Then I stumbled into a guy in the winter of 1979 and I really started to become involved in bootleg videocassettes. We were both playing in some amateur golf tournament. We had a few drinks in the clubhouse afterward. He worked for a company that supplied legal videotape entertainment for ships at sea and oil rigs. You could order 60 movies on videocassette at a time. Many of those movies were not legally available to home users. I told him I really wanted movies on videocassette. He said, "Why don't you come to my of-

fice some time and borrow whatever you like?"

Guess what? I took him up on his offer. But I never told him at first that I was making copies of those same films. When I did, he said, "Gee, I don't like that. I could get in trouble."

I said, "I tell you what. I'll give you \$20 a movie."

He accepted and he became one of my main sources for movies. Having a steady supply of top movies is the lifeblood of any video bootlegger. That's when I dove into bootlegging—May of 1979, right after I sold my business. It wasn't something that I thought about a lot. It seemed like something fun to do, but it rapidly got out of control.

There's a lot of intrigue in it. People were always coming up to me asking, "Bob, can you get me this? Can you get me that?" It was an ego trip. All you seemed to need was two videocassette recorders and you were in business. But, of course, there was more to it, as I was to learn.

**T**hat May, a friend of mine who owned a movie theater told me he wanted a videotape copy of "Grease" for his wife and kids so they could watch in the comfort of their own home. This was about eight months before Paramount released it legally on videocassette. He asked me how it might be done. At the time I was not nearly as expert as I am now, but I told him I'd give it a try.

I bought a video camera just for the occasion and went up to the projection booth during a weekday screening and videotaped it right off the screen. I didn't even have to bribe the projectionist. He was the owner's son. The quality of that videocassette of "Grease" was awful, but it taught me a lesson. I'd have to improve the technical quality of the tapes if I was serious about the business. So I started reading up on the subject in books and trade magazines.

I finally called Sony's headquarters in New York and told them a little white lie. I said I had a friend who had some 35-mm. movies and that we wanted to put them on videocassette. We tried videotaping them off the screen but every time we did, we'd get a little vertical roll down the center of the picture. "Just how do we get rid of that?" I asked.

"Oh," said the technical expert at Sony that I contacted, "you won't get any quality doing it that way. You need a telecine projection system, a system that's made especially for film-to-videotape transfers."

Touchdown! If I was to make connec-

tions with owners of movie theaters, I would need equipment that could transfer 35 mm. to videotape. Once a film is on videotape, it's a cinch to run off as many copies as the market demands. And the demand is big.

So I went shopping for a telecine projection system. There was one problem: the price. Companies—like RCA, Singer and Norelco—that manufacture these units sometimes want as much as \$100,000 for them. Their representatives are all very nice and tell you all you need to know. Instead, I went out and bought a used one for \$35,000 through a classified ad in one of the industrial video magazines. Because I had a lot of money around from the sale of my business, I paid cash for it.

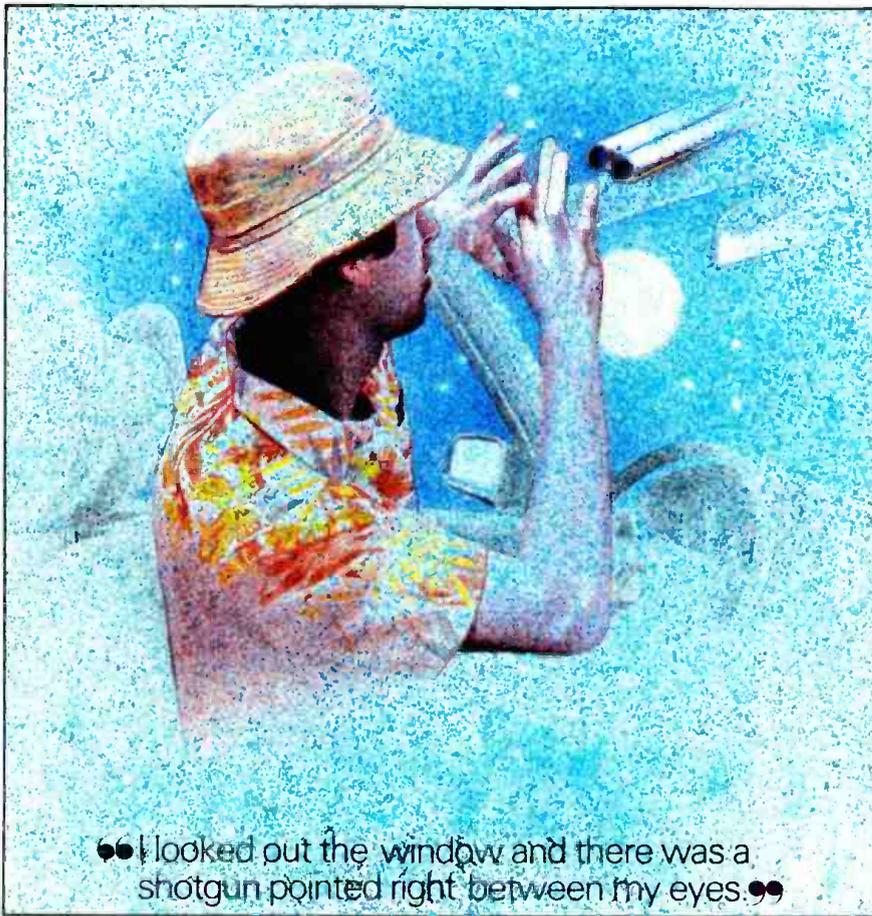
Now, a telecine projection system is a big chunk of hardware. You don't just buy one, throw it in the trunk of your Pontiac, drive home and set it up in your rec room. Those babies weigh about 900 pounds and stand around 6.5 feet high. Get the picture? I rented an office just outside of town where the system was brought by truck. That was the office that the FBI subsequently raided.

I moved into that office beginning in June just for my bootleg operation. Naturally, I used a fake name and the rent was always paid in cash. I also set up a checking account with a fake name. Suddenly, I was involved with fake identities, cash-only transactions, illegal business deals—and I was more thrilled than I had ever been before in my life.

**I**t's a little like the strait-laced guy who's never been to Vegas before and he spends a few days there, drops 10 grand at the craps table, and has a hell of a time. He knows he should feel terrible about it, but every time he thinks about it, a smile crosses his face. That's what was happening to me.

I'm sorry about it now, but at the time it was thrilling. My wife always knew what I was doing, and she didn't seem to mind. Her feeling, and mine too, was that it wasn't hurting anybody. It wasn't like going into a store and walking out with a fur coat without paying for it.

Getting the telecine projector setup was really the critical element in my success as a bootlegger. It meant that I could run off quality video copies of major motion pictures. My next big step was to contact a theater owner and see if I could bribe him to loan me his film for a few hours so I could make a videotape copy on my telecine projector. To do that, I had to make a cold call. That is, I had to approach a theater owner I had never met before and ask



I took out my wallet and peeled off five one-hundred-dollar bills. "You get the other five when I'm finished transferring it to videotape," I told him. "Now get your film and let's go to my place."

First we went up to his office, he put the \$500 in his desk, locked the drawer and got the 35-mm. print of "Alien." Then we drove to my office where we transferred the film to videotape. I gave him the rest of the money, he took his film, and I kept the videotape master from which I ran off dozens of illegal copies of "Alien" before the film even reached commercial theatrical distribution. And the quality was excellent. Technically, the film was not stolen. I mean, the theater manager still had the film in his possession. Only I had a perfect video master of a very hot movie, which, in the world of video pirating, becomes like a license to print money.

**T**he next major step in becoming a successful video pirate is to find retail outlets that will buy your product. That's easy, too. You just ask the store if they carry titles they're not supposed to have. For instance, "Star Trek" isn't legally available but I would get on the phone and ask for it. Sometimes, the store would come right out and say yes. Other times, the salesman would say maybe or give some kind of vague answer. I could always tell which ones dealt in pirated videocassettes. And any stores that sold pirated videocassettes were potential customers for me.

When I made several hundred video copies of "Alien," I knew I had to start selling them. I wasn't looking for individual customers. I wanted stores that would buy in bulk. My minimum order was 20 copies of a particular movie for \$50 apiece—double the price for a hot movie like "Alien" that wasn't legally available on videocassette and hadn't even opened in the theaters. I would never sell a store just one copy because then they could run off as many copies as they wanted.

Peddling "Alien" was simple. It went something like this. I'd drive into some town and look for stores that seemed to be selling video equipment. I'd go in, meet the owner or manager and start talking about bootleg videocassettes. Very casually I'd ask if he'd be interested in seeing "Alien" on cassette. The eyes would widen, the head would nod, and I'd pop a videocassette into a VCR.

They'd be very interested in the quality because most retailers are used to getting rotten videocassettes from California—which raises an interesting

him to loan me a film for a few hours.

If you remember, last summer's big hit was "Alien." I'm a sci-fi freak and I know there's a very big demand for that stuff. Look, "Star Wars" was one of the biggest motion pictures of all time. There was this theater in central Florida that was advertising a sneak preview of "Alien." When a film is given a sneak preview, it's usually shown only one time, say on a Friday night. But the theater sometimes gets the film several days in advance and it just sits up in the manager's office until the night of the preview.

**T**wo days before the sneak preview of "Alien," I attended a matinee of some movie in that same theater. I waited for the movie to start with my heart thumping like a drum in my chest. After about 15 minutes, I wandered out into the lobby as I had planned. Sure enough, there's a guy about 30 standing there in one of those spiffy theater jackets with the word "Manager" across his breast pocket. When I got through with him, he looked about 40.

I started talking with him. I said, "Your theater does a nice business. Are movies on videocassettes hurting your business?"

He shook his head no.

"Do you ever get approached by bootleggers?" I asked. "I understand some of these video bootleggers pay as much as \$500 or \$1000 for a first-run feature."

**T**hat became my standard line in approaching theater managers. If their eyes flickered with excitement, then I knew that I was going to be able to make a deal with them. And this guy's eyes flickered.

I said to him, "There are people who would pay \$1000 to borrow 'Alien' for three hours."

"Mister," he replied, "for \$1000 you could have my wife."

"I don't want your wife," I told him. "I want 'Alien'."

He hesitated for only a second. "All right. But on two conditions. First, the price is \$1000. Second, the movie doesn't leave my sight."

I said, "That's fine with me. I'll even give you my driver's license until we get back just so you won't think I'm going to jump you and steal your movie." In Florida, all driver's licenses have the driver's picture on them. I felt if a guy was going to let me borrow his movie, he might as well know who I am.

point. I wasn't introducing any retailer to the concept of pirated videocassettes. They were all savvy about it and most of the bootleg products they peddled were terrible. But the public's dumb. They'll buy a lousy bootleg tape just to be the first one on the block to have it. I'm sure I can put a little snow on a blank videotape, fuzz up the sound track and tell somebody that it's "The Empire Strikes Back" and he'll not only believe it, he'll tell you how much he enjoyed watching it in his own living room.

**S**o the store managers loved buying from me because I was a perfectionist in the bootleg copies that I sold. Thank God for that telecine projector. I developed just 10 stores that I would sell to, for two reasons. First, I was cautious, and, second, I don't believe in working weekends. As it was, I was working maybe 15 to 18 hours a week as a videotape bootlegger and was netting a cash profit of about \$6000 a week after expenses.

Those expenses entailed bribes to get the films, buying raw videotape and also paying my staff of four people who worked just about around the clock running off duplicates of the films I was getting. With the country in a recession and a lot of people out of work, who's going to turn down \$750 in cash a week to run 15 videocassette recorders? I didn't put an ad in the newspaper or anything like that. I hired friends and friends of friends. They knew that they were involved in something illegal.

Throughout the summer of 1979, business was quite brisk. I had my telecine projector, 15 videocassette recorders duplicating pirated 'movies' around the clock, a staff of four, and 10 retail outlets that were buying whatever I could produce. But I still needed more sources for 35-mm. films. The theater owner that I borrowed "Alien" from put me in contact with another theater owner in south Florida who was videotaping films off the screen and selling them on the bootleg market. He was looking for a contact with a telecine projector. So we made a deal.

Every other Saturday night, after the late show, he would fly in two movies on a private plane. I'd meet him at this country airport in the swamps about 2 in the morning, we'd transfer the films to videotape, and he'd be back on his way by 6 A.M. No money changed hands. I'd give him a videotape of the movie so he could run off as many videocassettes as he wanted.

One hot night late in July, I was sitting in my car in the middle of the night waiting for his twin-engine Cessna to

land. I looked out the window and there was a shotgun pointed right between my eyes. I thought, "This is it. They finally caught me."

About four other guys in plain clothes surrounded the car with guns drawn. They could have shot a plane out of the sky with all the weapons they had.

They identified themselves as Federal agents and demanded to know what I was doing at the airport in the middle of the night. I told them I was waiting for some movies to be flown in. It turned out they were from the Drug Enforcement Administration and they were casing the airport for an illegal shipment of drugs from South America. Three minutes later my plane

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“The public's dumb.  
They'll buy a lousy  
bootleg tape  
just to be the first one on  
the block to have it.”

---

landed and all six of us went out to the runway to meet it. They had me open the film cans and when they saw that they weren't stuffed with cocaine or marijuana, they let us go. Later I found out they made a huge drug bust that night.

With all this excitement, I decided that I needed a vacation. So my wife and I made up our minds to take a cruise. Fortunately, one of the presidents of the big cruise lines in Miami had a videocassette recorder and wanted current movies. I was introduced to him through a local barter club, which is made up of local merchants who swap products with one another instead of paying cash. This cruise-line president wanted movies and I wanted a free trip. I gave him a list of movies and he picked five. He thought he was being a pig. My wife and I got an eight-day cruise to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands in an upper-deck cabin. Hell, I drank more wine than the tapes were worth.

**I** didn't just swap tapes for cruises. I swapped tapes for steaks with the local butcher, tapes for suits with the local tailor, tapes for rented cars, and even tapes for numbered prints of Chagall and Leroy Neiman paintings.

About the end of August, things

started to get spooky for me. I was living the high life, but it was taking its toll. First of all, it began to trouble me that what I was doing was dishonest, and the more I got into it, the more dishonest it got. Every time the doorbell rang after 9 P.M., I thought I was about to be busted. Every time a new employee was hired at a store that I dealt with, I figured he must be an FBI plant and I'd almost stop dealing with that store.

I told my wife in September that I was getting out of the bootleg business. She was extremely happy. I said that I was going to open up a legitimate store that sold nothing but prerecorded videocassettes. But even as I was signing leases and making arrangements to go straight, it was too late. If I had gotten out three weeks earlier—before I did business with an undercover agent—I never would have been busted.

One of the stores that I was selling pirated videocassettes to had an FBI plant, who posed as a regular employee, working for it. That's what led to my arrest. The FBI arrested me on the morning of Oct. 26, 1979. Three days later I appeared in Federal court for an arraignment.

I took a guilty plea on one count of copyright infringement, which is a misdemeanor punishable by up to a \$25,000 fine and/or one year in jail. A week later they dropped all charges when I agreed that the FBI could keep all my video equipment, which amounted to about \$60,000 in hardware. That was my real punishment. They knew I wasn't a real bad guy. A week after that, I opened my prerecorded-video retail store, selling and renting legitimate movies on videocassettes.

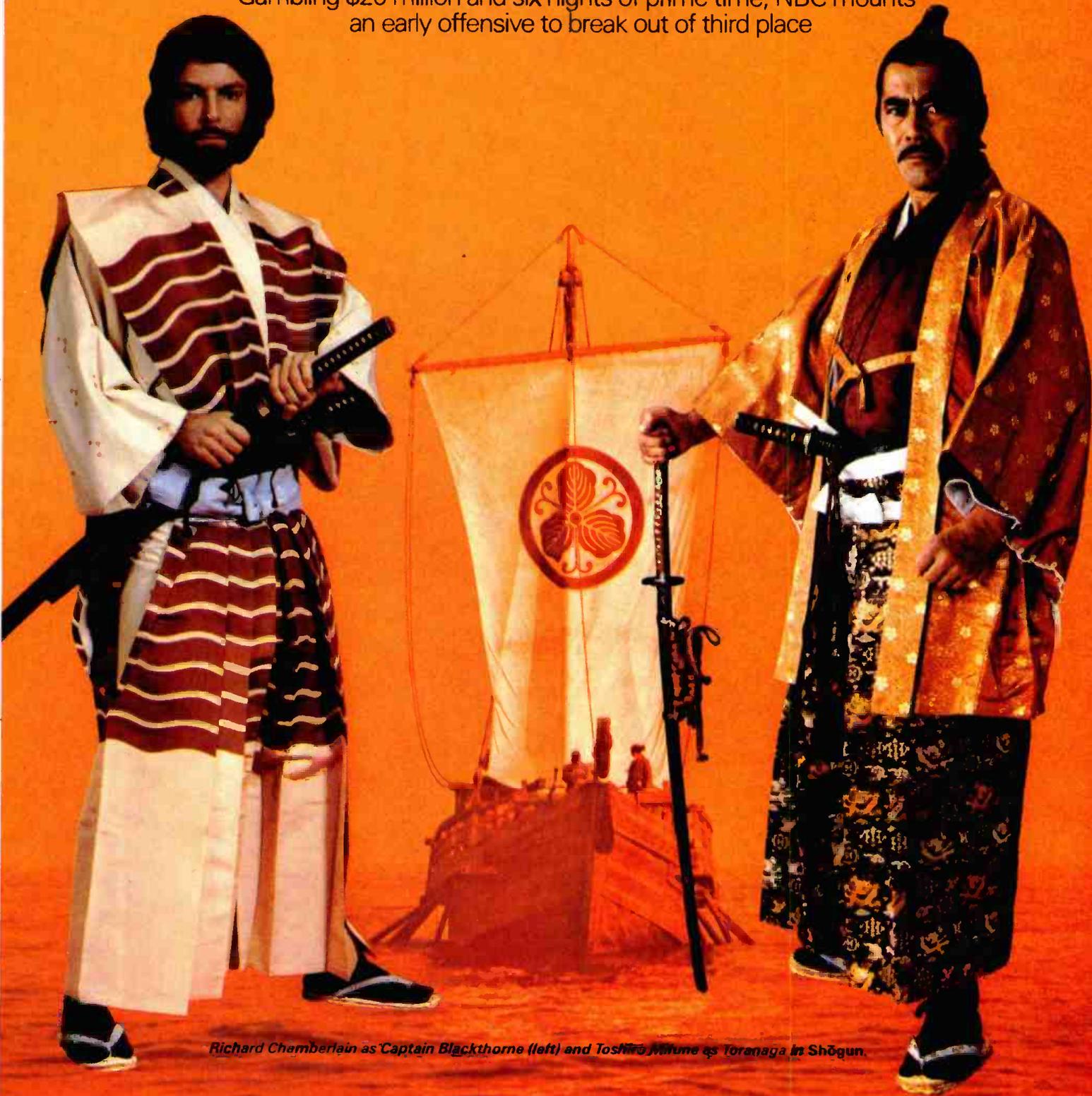
**W**hat I'd really like to do now is work for the video division of one of the major film companies. I know that sounds crazy, but I'd be a great sales representative for them. After Prohibition ended, the liquor companies hired all the bootleggers because they were the guys who really knew the booze business. I know what sells and what doesn't, and I can walk into a store and tell in two minutes if the guy is selling bootleg tapes.

If Warner Home Video or Paramount doesn't give me a job, I'll just have to stick it out with my small legitimate retail operation. But there's not much money in this end of the business. The profit margins are very small, the prices for the videocassettes are too high, and the movies on cassettes aren't the new blockbusters.

And it's also tough as hell competing against those shrewd video pirates. ■

# The "Shōgun" Blitz— Ratings Coup or Nielsen Hara-kiri?

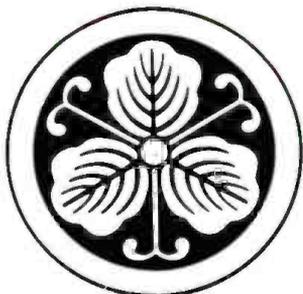
Gambling \$20 million and six nights of prime time, NBC mounts  
an early offensive to break out of third place



*Richard Chamberlain as Captain Blackthorne (left) and Toshirō Mifune as Toranaga in Shōgun.*



“Clavell doesn't actually know very much about Japan.”



*Above, Blackthorne is introduced by his interpreter Mariko (Yoko Shimada, right) to Kiku (Mika Kitagawa), "a courtesan of the First Class." A night in Kiku's company is Toranaga's reward to Blackthorne for having saved him from mortal danger.*

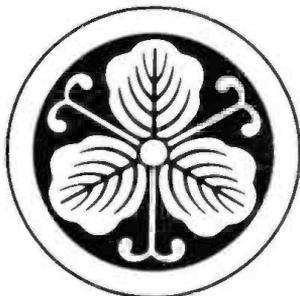
*Left, Toranaga rounds up his troops in preparation for the decisive battle with Lord Ishido, his rival for the all-powerful position of Shōgun.*

One Sunday evening next month, at eight o'clock (ET), you will be sitting in front of your television with that familiar blend of curiosity, excitement and cynicism that rises from the gut as the networks launch their new season.

You will have read by then that the conspicuous loser of the past four seasons, NBC, is determined to win your love and devotion this time around and, in a preemptive strike for your heart, has spent \$20 million on a six-part miniseries called *Shōgun* — the story of a 17th-century English sea captain, John Blackthorne, stranded on the alien islands of Japan. You might even have demonstrated your good will by buying a *Shōgun* T-shirt. And the book about the miniseries (not to be confused with James Clavell's best-selling novel on which the miniseries is based) might be lying on your coffee table.

You are, in short, prepared for *Shōgun*, and you turn on your set. By 11 P.M., you will know whether you have fallen in love with a peacock.

The wooing will not be carried out with sonnets and the sound of mandolins. Instead, you will be invited to witness a beheading, listen to a sailor's screams as he is boiled alive, watch a samurai's face as he commits sep-



Right, a skiff ferries Blackthorne and Toranaga, with their retinue, to the safety of Blackthorne's square-rigged bark, the *Erasmus*, as they escape from confinement in Osaka Castle. In real life, the *Erasmus* is the *Golden Hinde II*, a replica of Sir Francis Drake's flagship that is normally moored in San Francisco harbor.



*puku* (hara-kiri), and see Richard Chamberlain, who plays Blackthorne, lying on the ground while a samurai urinates on his back.

**Y**ou might, indeed, come to wish that you weren't the object of such ardent desire on the part of NBC president Fred Silverman. On the other hand, you might relish every moment of this expensive courtship and look forward impatiently to the remaining five episodes—tightly packed into the succeeding weeknights—which show how Blackthorne becomes involved in the brutal struggle of warlord Toranaga (Toshiro Mifune) to become Japan's supreme military dictator, the Shōgun.

The awful unpredictability of your reac-

tions should be wracking the nerves of everyone connected with this mammoth project, but, in fact, all the shoptalk is wildly optimistic, if not downright smug: "The best thing that will ever be on television," says James Clavell, who is also *Shōgun's* executive producer; "The miracle of all times," says director Jerry London.

**A**mong those capable of taking a more detached view of *Shōgun* there is less unanimity about its merits, particularly as a historical document. Henry Smith, a University of California historian, says: "Clavell doesn't actually know very much about Japan. Most people involved in Japanese studies were horrified by 'Shōgun' [the



“If ever a head-chopping can be done tastefully, we’ve done it.”

novel]. Virtually half the names of Japanese characters wouldn’t wash as Japanese names” — including Toranaga.

Chieko Mulhern, who teaches Japanese literature at the University of Illinois, cites other incidents in *Shōgun* as distortions of history: women bathing in the nude and in tubs (instead of steam baths); the boiling of the sailor (only one boiling — of an assassin — is on record for that period, according to Mulhern); and a prison scene “that is right out of medieval Europe or 17th-century France instead of Japan.”

Clavell’s depiction of Japanese attitudes toward life and death is also faulted: “He uses an Indian concept of ‘karma’ as blind fatal-

ism,” says Smith. “Sometimes his characters even prefer death to life. That’s a distortion of the Japanese attitude, which was that you could change your karma in this life. How else can you explain such an achievement-oriented culture?”

Clavell and producer Eric Bercovici answer complaints like these by pointing out that their story is fiction. It is not a documentary about Will Adams and Tokugawa Ieyasu, the historical counterparts of Blackthorne and Toranaga. Furthermore, it’s *American* fiction. “The problem,” says Bercovici, “was that we made the picture in Japan, with Japanese actors and crew, set against Japanese history, and everybody thought we were making a Japanese picture. We weren’t. We were making an American picture.”

The American bias is, paradoxically, underscored by the fact that all the Japanese characters speak in their own language — without subtitles, dubbing or voice-overs. They will be as incomprehensible to most American viewers as they were to Blackthorne himself.

Japanese audiences, however, who will see the film in an abbreviated, theatrical version, will have no language problem: the English-speaking parts will be dubbed into Japanese. The big-screen export version will also be bloodier than the TV miniseries, but Bercovici doesn’t expect any protests on that score: “We’re a fairy tale compared to the samurai pictures they make themselves,” he says. “If ever a head-chopping can be done tastefully, we’ve done it.”

While *Shōgun* was being shot at Toho studios in Tokyo, the renowned Japanese director Akira Kurosawa was working next door on “Kagemusha,” a film that’s set in approximately the same time and place. Kurosawa’s movie later became joint winner of the grand prize at the Cannes film festival, but a *Shōgun* staff member who has seen “Kagemusha” asserts without a trace of self-doubt: “Ours is better.”

Perhaps Clavell and Bercovici heeded the advice of Blackthorne’s interpreter and lover, Mariko (Yoko Shimada), who explains at one point: “To understand Japanese, you have to think Japanese. Our language is the language of the infinite. It is all so simple. Just change your concept of the world.”

But what Mr. Silverman wants to know is: Will *Shōgun* change your concept of NBC? ■



**F**or better or worse, America's favorite indoor activity has moved out-of-doors. If you think television viewing is strictly an at-home preoccupation, you're behind the times. You can now take black-and-white, or even color, television with you almost anywhere you go. That means on the patio, at picnics, to the beach, in your camper or boat — or to the football game for your own personal instant replays. You can even carry along a complete entertainment center, with AM-FM stereo radio, stereo cassette player, even a built-in alarm clock to tell you when to light the charcoal.

Of course, most people don't. But

## ATV Set to Go, Please

At last there are *true* portables,  
and here are the facts you should know  
before buying one

By DAVID LACHENBRUCH



when you consider that about 25 percent of all black-and-white television sets now being sold are designed for DC as well as AC operation, it probably means that each year about one-and-a-half million people have out-of-home TV intentions. Of course, some people may just buy the little sets because they're cute.

In the television industry, a "portable" traditionally has been defined as any set with a handle, although the term sometimes is stretched to include all sets with screen sizes 19 inches and smaller. Since such sets can weigh as much as 75 pounds, the larger portables have become known as "hernia

models." Their portability consists principally of their ability to be wheeled from room to room on a sturdy cart with well-lubricated casters or carried by well-muscled persons for distances measured in feet.

**T**hanks to the development of solid-state circuits, which cut weight and sharply reduced power consumption, a new breed of TV set began to emerge in the 1960s that the industry called the "true portable"—a sort of backhanded admission that it had been selling false portables for some time. These sets vary in weight from about five pounds for a tiny 1½-

incher to as much as 20 pounds, plus battery weight, for a deluxe entertainment center with all the stereophonic fixin's.

The "true portable" AC-DC sets need some further defining. All such portables, of course, come equipped to play on standard house current, like a conventional TV. What they can do from there on—with or without extra equipment—varies all over the lot. Those described simply as "AC-DC" usually are designed to play on both house current and 12 volts direct current. The 12 volts means an automobile or boat battery, and the set may or may not come with a cord to plug it into the

car, or boat, cigarette-lighter socket. The inclusion of the cord is fairly important, since accessory cords can set you back another \$10 or more. Unfortunately, shopping around for an accessory lighter cord can be frustrating, since different brands of TVs use different types of plugs to connect their sets to lighter sockets.

**A**s a matter of fact, the entire portable field is plagued by a lack of standardization, or even common definitions. A set listed as "AC/DC/Battery" or "three-way" or "four-way" will work on (1) house current; (2) car or boat current; or (3 and 4) its own rechargeable or nonrechargeable batteries, free of any kind of power cord. (Ways 3 and 4 are sometimes combined in advertising material prepared before someone figured out that rechargeable and nonrechargeable batteries could be counted as separate ways.)

But that isn't all you have to remember. There are all kinds of subdivisions and variations. To list a few: 1. Capable of battery operation but sold with no battery and no place to put a battery if you had one. The battery pack, usually including a recharger, is carried separately, sometimes slung from the shoulder (adding another seven pounds of dead weight). 2. With an internal battery compartment (batteries sold separately) but no battery charger. 3. With built-in or clip-on battery pack and charger. 4. With built-in charger but without batteries (which are extra).

Most current sets are designed to be operated with "D" cells, the size used in a flashlight. Because of the relatively heavy power drain, it's necessary that these be alkaline cells. But if you use size "D" alkaline cells—which aren't rechargeable—you'll be paying up to \$9 for perhaps four hours of cordless TV operation, since some TVs require nine cells (at \$1 each). Therefore, a charger (if one doesn't come with the set) and rechargeable nickel-cadmium (NiCad) cells are worth the investment. In some cases, chargers aren't even offered as accessories. But those designed for NiCad cells are generally available from electrical or appliance stores and will pay for themselves quickly with sets that are frequently operated away from a power line. When external battery chargers are available as accessories with TV sets, their cost can vary from \$15 to \$75, depending on type of charger and brand of set.

Of course, not all sets use flashlight-sized batteries. Some have sealed rechargeable wet cells, usually either

built into the set itself or designed to clip on as a base or back. These sets have built-in chargers, which will rejuvenate the battery in about eight hours so long as the set is plugged into household current; it makes no difference if the set is on or off.

Most battery TVs are designed to operate continuously for at least three hours on a charge or set of disposable cells, or longer if operated intermittently. This is considered an irreducible minimum: any battery set should be able to show an entire football or baseball game without going dark at the crucial moment and leaving you wondering who won. Most good sets will give you at least four or five hours before the batteries quit. Playing time per charge or set of batteries should be in the manufacturer's specifications, and you're wise to shy away from any model for which this information isn't disclosed. Most rechargeable batteries are supposed to be good for 100 charges or more. Wet cells are likely to take more charges than NiCads, but they can be somewhat heavier.

Obviously, a lot of prethinking should go into buying a portable, but few buyers seem to bother. There's considerable evidence that most true portables are purchased on impulse—which is exactly the wrong way to go about buying such a specialized (and often expensive) product. If you're in the market for one, it's important to know what your needs are and plan your purchase, being careful not to buy more (or less) than you can use.

**T**he most popular black-and-white screen sizes are 12 and 9 inches, in that order. If you want a small-screen set just to use around the house—in the bedroom, kitchen or den—you're far better off buying an AC-only model. In either size, these usually are available for less than \$100, as opposed to \$120 and up for AC-DC sets without battery, and around \$150 to \$200 or more for those sold with batteries. Even for occasional patio use, you'll come out ahead with an AC-only set and an extension cord.

For the recreational vehicle or powerboat, an AC-DC set designed for 12-volt operation should fill the bill without the encumbrance or expense of self-contained or external battery operation.

For the great outdoors, there's a wide range of choices, and what you buy can vary widely depending on where you live and what kind of use you're going to make of the set. First and foremost, if you need an outdoor antenna to get any kind of reception at home, or if your picnics and outings take you more than

30 or 40 miles from the nearest television station, you may as well forget about enjoying *All My Children* with your ant sandwiches—unless you want to climb up the nearest tree and install a log-periodic super-yagi. (If you have to ask—it's a kind of antenna—you don't want one.) The monopole and bow-tie antennas that come with portables simply aren't designed for good fringe-area reception.

**H**owever, if you're going to use the set fairly close to TV transmitters, you'll probably be able to get fair-to-good reception outdoors from almost any black-and-white or color portable. (If you camp or picnic a few feet from the car, it's wise to depend on the automobile battery rather than a self-contained one. Of course, like headlights, a TV running on battery current will eventually drain the power, unless you recharge it by running the engine.) Most AC-DC sets come with removable sun-shields, dark plastic screen covers to increase contrast for outdoor viewing. The term "sun-shield" actually is a misnomer; no set is really bright enough to view in direct sunlight. Most will do in the proverbial leafy glade, however.

For group or family viewing on outings, a 9- or 12-inch set is best. As screen sizes get smaller, it becomes progressively harder for more than one person to follow the action—and, believe it or not, prices go up as screen sizes go down. This is known as the cuteness premium.

Although you can use the cigarette-lighter socket in your car for power, this doesn't mean you'll get good reception in a moving vehicle. Without a special car-top antenna (and sometimes even with one), the flutter and fade in a car are intolerable, so if you're counting on Mighty Mouse to keep the kids from fighting in the back seat on a long trip—don't. Also forget about trying to watch television while you're driving. Even if you could get a decent picture, an operating TV within the driver's range of vision is considered prima facie evidence of reckless driving in some states.

We come now to the latest in portable TVs: the "minicombo." These multipurpose, portable TV/audio systems are so new there's been no definitive research on how people use them, but they're being imported from Taiwan, Korea and elsewhere at a half-a-million-a-year clip. Minicombo what? Well, they usually combine a TV screen 5 inches or smaller with an AM-FM radio, weather-band radio, CB and emergency-band radio, audio cassette



Earl "Madman" Muntz claims that this 5-inch Sony—on which he can view rushes from his car's two video cameras, pointed at the road ahead—promotes safe driving. Some states would call it reckless.

recorder and/or digital alarm-clock/timer (choose two or more). They're all capable of AC, car and built-in or external battery operation (most gobble up "D" cells), and some—a few—contain rechargers.

Although they're specifically designed as the video equivalent of the tote-about cassette-radio, it's believed most minicombo don't venture far from home, many being used by people who simply want to wake up to an inch-high Jane Pauley. The smallest mini is Panasonic's 1½-inch set with AM-FM radio at around \$300. This one probably does get out of the home occasionally, because of its extreme portability and because it's designed to receive European as well as American television signals—something that none of the other current-model minicombo can do.

At the "giant-screen" end of the minicombo field is Sharp's 9-incher with AM-FM and cassette player (\$300), but most sets have 5-inch screens—such as RCA's newly introduced Playmate, with AM-FM, weather-band radio and digital clock/timer (\$200), which weighs in at 11½ pounds. Just below the middle of the screen-size range is Sony's 14-pound stereo model with 3.7-inch screen, AM-FM and cassette recorder, at \$380. Although all of these models have shoulder straps or carrying handles, they really seem designed for personal entertainment at home. Can you picture a hip group of 35 or so TV junkies gathered around the bonfire watching *Saturday Night Live* on a 3.7-inch screen?

The aristocrat of portable televisions is the "true portable" color set. Like true black-and-white portables, the color variety now comes only in smaller screen sizes. Because the higher price of color sets limits sales, fewer models are available, but you do have some

say in the matter. For instance, Panasonic's AC-DC version for boat or recreational vehicle comes in three sizes—7, 10 and 12 inches—for about \$360 to \$440. Sampo has a 9-incher at \$360, and Hitachi a 5-incher, which will operate on nine "D" cells as well as household or automobile juice, at \$450. Sony offers three take-along color sets: an 8-inch AC-DC at \$500, a 5-inch battery set at \$550 and a 3.7-inch battery-operated cutie at the same price. This last one is the smallest color set sold in the U.S.; it weighs only seven pounds and actually can be held in the palm of the hand (although not with ease).

The color portable has all the problems of the black-and-white version and then some. Good reception is more critical than with black-and-white sets, so proximity to a transmitter is even more important. And color pictures are more likely to wash out in bright light. It's doubtful that many people will take portable color on a picnic, but in a camper or boat, or at the backyard barbecue, these sets let you enjoy the wonderful world of carry-along color without the umbilical cord.

An important new use for portable TV may be spawned by the growing hobby of video photography. Portable video cameras and recorders now let you roam the great outdoors making your own home sound movies on tape. Although most good video cameras have their own self-contained electronic viewfinders—1½-inch picture tubes mounted behind the eyepiece—a larger screen can give you a much better idea of what you're shooting and permits you to play back the picture and sound immediately after recording. Carrying a relatively heavy TV set along with a bulky portable VCR and video camera isn't exactly traveling light, but everything can easily be loaded in the car, which becomes, in ef-

fect, your own mini-mobile TV studio.

Earl "Madman" Muntz, the television marketing pioneer who now specializes in video and runs a projection-TV factory and retail outlets in California, has developed the art of mobile TV recording and monitoring to a new high. His own specially equipped Lincoln Continental contains two video cameras aimed at the road ahead and a 5-inch Sony black-and-white set installed where the glove compartment normally would be. Muntz is ever ready to tape anything and everything that can be seen from the car (he claims that the TV monitor promotes safe driving), and he can detach a camera for shooting on foot and view the rushes immediately on his vehicle's built-in TV.

The new Sony 3.7-inch color sets actually are designed for use with a video recorder. They have jacks for plugging a recorder directly into their video and audio circuits, eliminating the need to attach it through the antenna terminals. The Sony thus becomes the first portable color-TV monitor designed for the American consumer market.

Another potential use for mini TV sets (although not necessarily battery-operated portables) is being exploited by some avid videotapers when watching one show and taping another. A small black-and-white set mounted atop or near the color set lets them keep track of the program they're taping while they devote most of their attention to the show they're supposed to be watching. Needless to say, this is an acquired taste and may not appeal to everyone.

Then again, "true portable" TV isn't for everyone, either. Unquestionably, many people who own these little sets rarely or never take advantage of the viewing mobility they provide. As many as 25 percent of portable-TV buyers never purchase accessory battery packs, and of those who do it's not known how many use them regularly. You can walk down the street with a stereo cassette player blasting away (if that's your style), but until somebody develops a TV set in a pair of eyeglasses—don't laugh, it's on the way—portable television remains much less versatile than portable audio.

The fact is, carry-along TV is a prime example of the art of the possible. Thanks to modern technology, these wonderful gadgets could be built to sell at a mass-market price. And so they were built, and people bought them in heavy numbers. But even the manufacturers don't have a clear idea of what people do with them. ■

# There Was Kate Hepburn Hiding in



*Firing Line's* host finds his TV fame a mixed blessing

By WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

**T**he editor of this journal, appraising my behavior on television, thinks he perceives an ambivalence toward celebritydom, a word I shall not use again in this essay or, if I can help it, ever again anywhere. But the estate to which I refer is not otherwise describable, save in a phrase: "the probability of being recognized." The editor of PANORAMA correctly surmises that it is television that is the distinctive form of exposure. More so, I would guess, than the movies, perhaps because one doesn't expect to come upon movie stars doing mundane things. But TV "personalities," as we are called, are the kind of people one runs into in the men's room or at a hot dog stand.

I have been asked, "How often are you recognized because you are on television?" The answer is: most of the time. Of 20 strangers who greet me, 15 will have seen me on television, two will have read my syndicated column, one or two my books, one my magazine. PANORAMA is right: appearing regularly on television means you will be recognized. At restaurants. At airports. Hell, at Plato's Retreat.

Is it all bad? One begins with the

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*William F. Buckley Jr. is the editor of National Review and host of the PBS discussion program Firing Line. His latest book is "Who's On First."*

most obvious disjunction: it is pleasurable to be recognized at an airport at which you have arrived slightly late and find yourself struggling in a queue with the prospect that you will miss the flight—recognized by an angel of mercy who leads you through the maze, and maybe even sticks you in first class. And, at the opposite end (I give, of course, hypothetical examples), it would certainly be disconcerting if the madam, ushering you in, exclaimed, "Well, well! Look who's here, girls! Tell me, Mr. B., do you really think Reagan can win?"

**T**he sensations of the celebrity lie somewhere in between what is welcome and what is appalling. And reductionisms (Malcolm Muggeridge: "The advantages of being a celebrity are that your butcher will give you an extra slab of meat"), while fun, are dangerous. For instance, it is embarrassing to be given preferential treatment at the clear expense of somebody else. On several visits to the "classless" Soviet society, I have been routinely embarrassed. The Communists take positive pleasure in walking you to the head of a huge line at a museum, or wherever. This is OK when the line is composed of Russians, who have never experienced equality, least of all since the advent of Communism, and are used to the practice. But as often as not those lines are

made up of American tourists, notoriously (and correctly) expressive on any departure from democratic procedure, and their displeasure is voiced either by cold, withering glances (New Englanders are good at this) or by shouts of "Who do you think you are, Buckley?"

I should make the point here that the celebrity both suffers and prospers to a considerable extent from his recognizability. Now, this factor is not an exact corollary of the frequency of your public exposure. Pardon me, but I would not recognize Peter Sellers if he and I occupied a waiting room at the dentist's office alone for four hours, even if my mind wandered to the point of studying his features. On the other hand, I would know in an instant if the other despondent in the waiting room was Johnny Carson or Gene Shalit.

**I** don't look like anybody else—though I recall that Walter Mondale once told me that, no doubt, I would find as dismaying as he did the news that we are supposed to look alike. Probably my distinctiveness has more to do with angularity of posture and set of the hair than anything else. On the other hand, I remember putting on the regulation helmet when riding my Honda down to the Broadway area to do a program with Johnny Carson a few years ago, and, having arrived 10

# One Corner, Bill Buckley in Another

minutes early, I wandered about the streets a bit, keeping the helmet on. A woman at the stoplight accosted me matter-of-factly: "Don't you find it hot wearing that helmet, Mr. Buckley?"

I sought counsel of a friend who has been in the theater all his life, and he advises me that a beret plus dark glasses will make you 80-percent proof against penetration, and that you can add another 15 percent if you put on a fake mustache. I bought one once, but the irregularity with which it hung on my upper lip caused more attention than that which I sought to avoid.

I do have a cap, the Greek model, and every now and again I put it on, and it helps. But mostly one endures, and I have not forgotten that I began by saying that there are dividends as well as drawbacks in instant recognition.

The point of maximum vulnerability, of course, is the airplane, on which I spend one half of my life. I remember a trip to Los Angeles four or five years ago under unusual circumstances—there were only two passengers in first class. The other passenger brushed by me, turning her back as she went by, and slithered into the bulkhead window seat on the starboard side as I, with equal nimbleness, hid myself at the diagonal end of the cabin with my customary moat, which comprises, as a rule, one typewriter and two briefcases.

Especially useful, if it happens to be that season in your working cycle, are galley proofs—the kind that stretch from head to foot. Stick one end under the apron of the aisle seat one row in front of you, roll open the proof to your belt line, focus furiously on it, and you are likely to be spared interruption.

But on this occasion there was only the reclusive lady, whose efforts to avoid social contact were at least the equal of mine. As it happened, there was no way to prevent bumping into her as we exited, and I found myself looking into the enchanting face of Katharine Hepburn. We smiled at each other and exchanged compliments, and neither of us gave voice to the relief we had both experienced at traveling 3000 miles without interruption.

David Niven, who is my buddy, tells of the awful sensation of looking out the window one day in Denver, having been freshly seated by the stewardess, and spotting a huge man with multicolored shoes, open shirt, and an engulfing sombrero coming up the com-

panionway. David knew, with that sense of fatalism that inheres in all of us when we realize that our number is up, that the Tall Outdoorsman would (a) sit next to him, and (b) immediately strike up a conversation.

David is the most sociable and considerate of men, but he hungered for four hours of privacy, so that when the man whinnied his recognition and began to ask questions about Life in Hollywood, Niven pointed expressively at his throat, opened his mouth, and emitted no sound at all: total laryngitis was the unspoken message.

The stranger said never mind, David would not need to say *anything* at all—he would do all the talking. Within 10 minutes, Niven recalls, he discovered that he was sitting next to one of the most fascinating men he had ever encountered, a physicist from Los Alamos. David effected a miraculous recovery.

People who are publicly recognized have the obligation, surely, to be genial; though none to be discursive. "I enjoy you on television, Mr. Buckley," is a kind thing to say, and invites a gesture of appreciation. "What do you think we ought to do about inflation, Mr. Buckley? Let me tell you what I think should be done about inflation. I'm a director—here, here's my card—of the Southwest Savings Bank..." invites a wave of the arm and a semi-hysterical expression of concern over missing the plane.

There are two mortal offenses, not lightly forgiven. The first is to be recognized in a crowded elevator by someone who embarks on a loud conversation, which in the nature of things incorporates 20 people who are probably totally uninterested in you.

"Mr. Buckley! Well, what are *you* doing in town! Oh gee, if my wife Lulu knew this! She's read all your books. Here, let me introduce you to Charlie. Charles L. Banks. Charlie, this is Mr. Buckley. *The Mr. Buckley*. Author of—what was your latest book?" But Woody Allen did that scene, outside the movie theater in "Annie Hall," and any imitation of it is pale.

The second unforgivable sin goes as follows:

"Say, who *are* you?" she says.

You're at the newsstand, buying a magazine. You nod absentmindedly.

"I know you're *somebody*. But who?"

You smile. Wanly, though this takes practice.

"Are you, let me see..." (To the woman at the counter) "Who *is* he? You must know."

It is best at this point to give up. I have tried variations, e.g., "I'm Teddy Kennedy." But that tends to prolong the torture and isn't very funny to begin with. Yet to say "I'm Bill Buckley" makes you feel as though you were running for office, and this is a feeling you should avoid at all costs, including the cost of running for office.

Here is something interesting about celebrities. The myth to the contrary notwithstanding, they are very seldom insulted. I have dealt in controversy the whole of my adult life, and only once was I accosted with direct hostility. Americans are funny that way. They don't mind booing you from the bleachers of an auditorium, but they won't go to you at the newsstand and say, "You're full of baloney"—let alone any earthier substitute.

I do not know the root of this, nor am I aware whether it is so in other countries in the world. The congenital sycophants to one side, I think that in America there is a shared sense about public persons, that they are owed some impalpable something—for their usefulness in sitting at the senators' desks, or writing the books or newspaper articles the people read, or filling the television screen on the odd moment.

Of course, it would be a better world if one were not acknowledged. Aloofness in public situations is the highest form of politeness. In Gstaad one is hardly ever hailed by strangers (though the winter denizens are not all that blasé: the Catholic population of Gstaad trebled at Mass on Sunday when Jackie Kennedy was there). On the other hand... there is that tight situation at the airport when, I suspect, even Greta Garbo (I feel that by merely writing down her name I affront her privacy) is happy at the corporealization of a Presence that takes her ticket, her bag, leads her to where she can sit down, and tells her that she will be informed when it is time to step aboard, that her seat is 3A, and unless the flight is sold out, seat 3B will be kept empty.

When that sort of thing happens to me, I am capable of saying to myself, "By God, Buckley, there are people around who are really grateful to you for saving the country." ■

# Networks vs. Big Oil: Why TV News Is Coming Up Dry

When uninformed reporters joust with protective spokesmen, the public is the loser

By FRANK DONEGAN

An oil company is not a chicken. You can't slice it open and examine its entrails like some classical soothsayer seeking answers to troubling and mysterious questions. The interior of the petroleum industry more closely resembles an immense briar patch, whose thorns are the points of sharp accountants' pencils and whose nourishment comes from the ever-fertile humus of international politics and Government regulation.

Even the most astute energy reporters tend to despair of ever penetrating this labyrinthine world completely and answering the question that lies at the heart of the matter: Are they ripping us off?

Given this dispiriting starting point, just how effective is television's coverage of oil? Is it venturing into the thicket and emerging with anything more valuable than scratched ankles and tattered clothes?

The answer you hear most often from folks on all sides of the issue is: no—television, with perhaps a few commendable exceptions, is doing a lousy job.

It would be inaccurate to say *everybody* in the oil industry hates the way television has covered the long-running, complex energy story, but, on the whole, "Big Oil" seems to feel it has been maligned, misquoted, misunder-

stood, misrepresented and generally sandbagged by TV news.

What may strike you as surprising is that some of television's most respected energy reporters agree with much of the criticism.

The oil industry's mistrust of TV dates back to the oil embargo of 1973-74. Before that time, television broadcast oil stories about as often as it did pieces on termite problems in New South Wales. Gas was 40 or 45 cents a gallon and all was right with the world. The public and, consequently, the news establishment were interested in other things. This state of affairs did not disturb the oil folks. There's was a sprawling, arcane industry chock-full of the feuds and internal competitions that only years of inbreeding and lack of public scrutiny can produce. They liked their privacy, thank you.

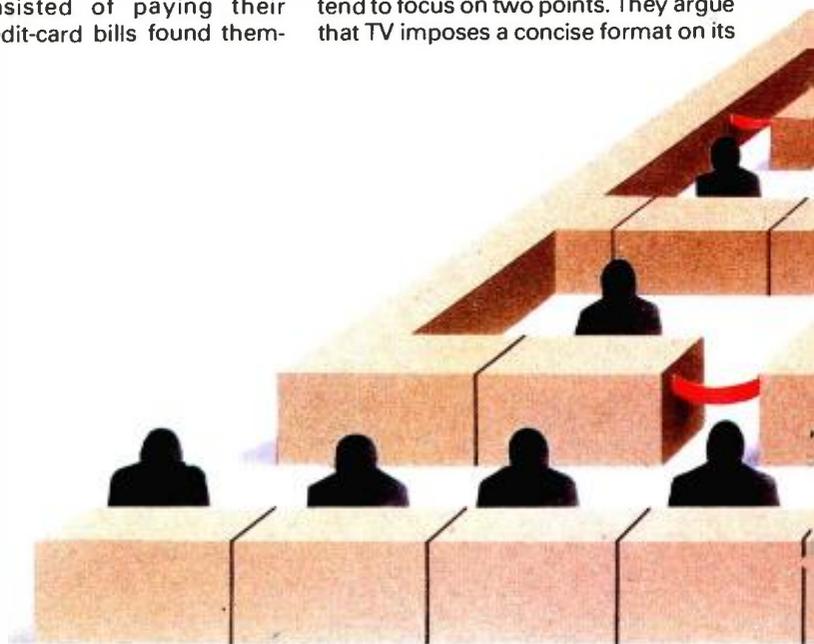
The "energy crisis" changed everything. "Boy, were we naive in those days," one oil man told me. "Back then our entire media-relations department consisted of two secretaries and a mimeograph machine." Suddenly, those somnolent public-relations offices became busier than a bookie's back room. Reporters whose closest previous contact with the oil industry consisted of paying their monthly credit-card bills found them-

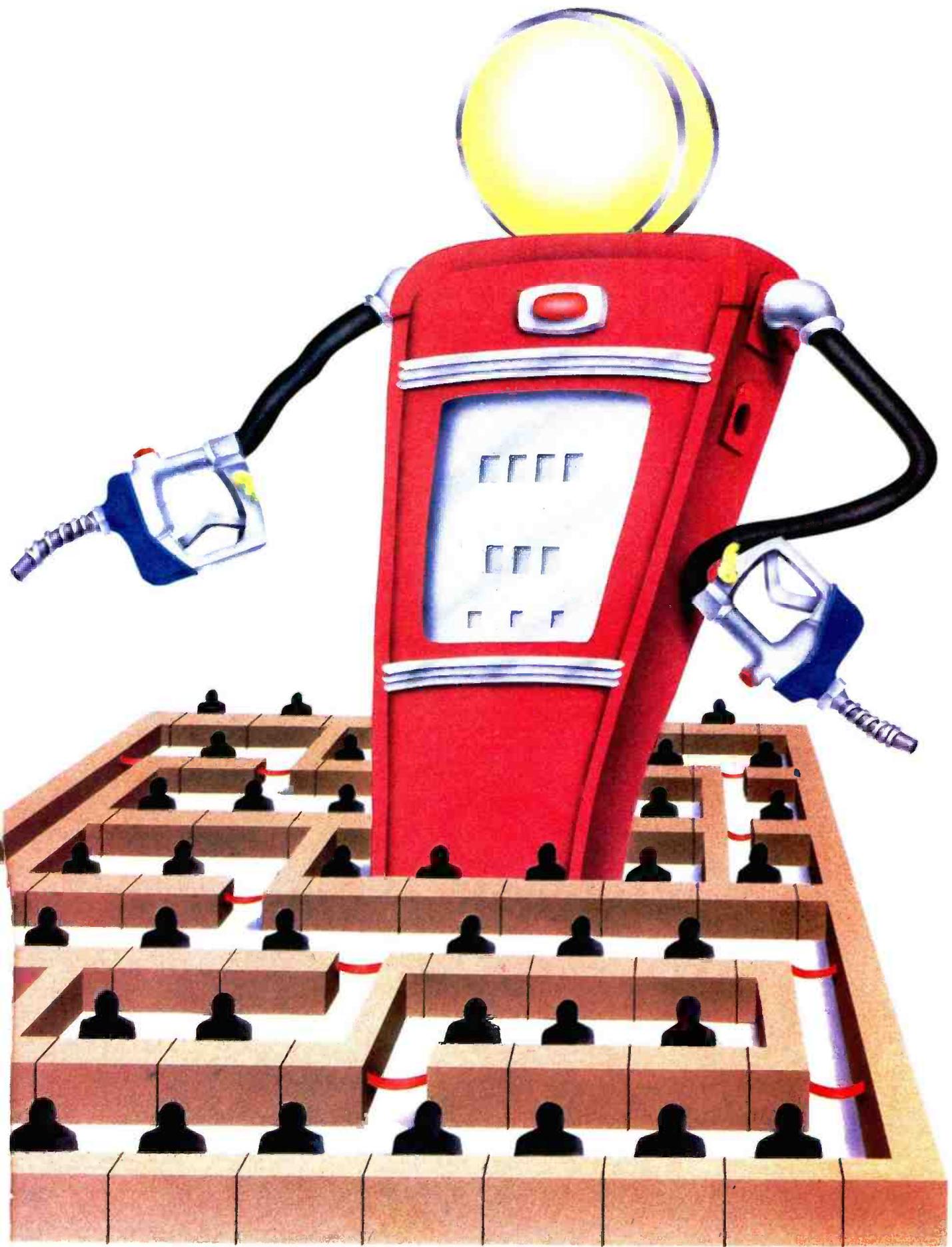
selves assigned to the energy beat. Oil executives, who used to think they were brave if they gave an off-the-record interview to *Oil & Gas Journal*, suddenly found themselves exposed to the glare of klieg lights and the grinding impersonality of network news cameras.

The result was predictable: bad stories reported by uninformed and suspicious reporters and interviews with nervous oil execs who looked like they were hiding a lot more than they were telling.

While everyone agrees that TV coverage of the oil story has improved since those early days, very few seem to think it is anywhere near adequate. Anthony Hatch, manager of corporate media relations for Atlantic Richfield (and a CBS newsman for 16 years before he joined Arco), put it this way when I spoke with him: "People magazine recently ran a poll and in among the entertainment crap was the question, 'Do you believe there's an energy crisis?' Three out of five people said no. Jeezus, we know that most people get their news from television, and if they don't know there's an energy crisis, then TV's not doing its job."

When venting their displeasure with TV coverage, those in the oil industry tend to focus on two points. They argue that TV imposes a concise format on its





MARK KAPLAN

news shows that is entirely unsuited to covering a story as complex as petroleum. The medium, they say, is indeed the message. And the medium, in this case, is so truncated and concise that the message is simplified to the point of caricature. The second gripe also hits at the structure of TV news. One oil man I talked with said, "News shows are exactly that—*shows*. They rely on ratings and they get those ratings by making the public say 'gee-whiz'."

Several working reporters, I found, go along with the substance of these complaints. They admit that network coverage of oil is often below par and that reporting on local stations is generally abysmal.

ABC's Roger Peterson says, "It's my

pet peeve. None of us involved in this field knows one/one-hundredth of what we should and many of us don't know one/one-thousandth of what we should." This comes from a man who (along with Nelson Benton of CBS) is generally credited by people on all sides of the oil issue as being among the very best TV energy reporters.

Even the best reporters only know the oil industry from the outside looking in. In the course of preparing this article I found it was not unusual to come across oil public-relations executives who had served time with the networks, but I failed to turn up a TV reporter who had ever worked for an oil company (except, perhaps, as a gas-pump jockey back in high school).

Those inside the oil industry tend to believe that TV goes out of its way to create sensational stories. Robert Goralski, a former NBC correspondent, who joined Gulf's P.R. staff about five years ago, says, "TV loves demagogues. They'll interview an extremist on the other side who makes wild charges and try to get us to answer. Then we look like extremists too. That's not balance; that's sensationalism."

An ABC News report on a Congressional committee meeting last year seemed to embody all the sensationalism the industry sees as rampant in the medium. What actually happened was this: Mobil chief William Tavoulares had testified for several hours about his company's stand on price

## Anatomy of an Oil Story

Throughout the week of Oct. 22, 1979, the major oil companies announced their third-quarter profits. The percentages bandied about were enormous: Mobil—up 131 percent over the third quarter in 1978; Exxon—up 118 percent; Gulf—up 97 percent; Standard Oil of Ohio—up 191 percent. The numbers came as a shock to a nation that had just spent a summer coping with gas lines, odd-even rationing and gasoline stations that kept bankers' hours.

To get an idea of just how thorough a job TV did on this story, we compared transcripts of the network evening-news shows for the three days—Oct. 22, 23 and 24—during which many of the oil firms released their figures.

Here's a summary of what we found:

### Monday, Oct. 22

**CBS.** Walter Cronkite leads the program with the oil-profits story, giving percentages for Exxon, Arco (up 45 percent) and Amoco (up 49 percent). CBS correspondent George Herman gives actual dollar figures of the Exxon profit increase (from \$525 million to \$1.145 billion), then summarizes Exxon's reasons for the gain—namely, increased opportunities for overseas profits caused by improved foreign exchange rates and British tax-law changes.

Quick cut to Exxon spokesman Jack Bennett, who says Exxon's overall U.S. profit is up only three percent. Quick cut to Sen. Howard Metzenbaum of Ohio, who says the higher profits are "a very basic reason" why

Americans are paying more for energy. Herman ends up with a quote from Jimmy Carter urging consumers to tell Congress they want Carter's windfall-profits tax.

The report runs approximately one-and-a-half minutes.

**NBC.** John Chancellor also leads with the oil story. The report, like the CBS one, is relatively short. Unlike CBS, it mentions only the Exxon profits and not the lower figures of Arco and Amoco. It, too, stresses that profits came from foreign sales. New York correspondent Mike Jensen relays Exxon's contention that OPEC price rises allow the company to sell its products for more on unregulated foreign markets. Quick cut to Wall Street analyst Constantine Fliakos, who says the same thing. Jensen notes that Exxon's return on investment is slightly higher than the average for all big business.

Quick cut to Exxon spokesman Jack Bennett, who says, "Profits in the United States this year in our marketing and refining are actually down." On the surface, this would seem to contradict what he told CBS.

**ABC.** Twenty-five-second report read by Frank Reynolds, buried 11 minutes into the show after the second commercial break. Only Exxon profits are mentioned and Reynolds gives a figure that is \$355 million off the mark (\$1.5 billion instead of \$1.145 billion). No reports from correspondents. Quick cut to Jimmy Carter pushing his windfall-profits tax.

### Tuesday, Oct. 23

**CBS.** Gulf and Conoco figures are re-

leased. CBS does not lead with oil (it is the third item today) but goes at the story in greater depth than yesterday, allotting it more than twice as much time. Ray Brady leads off with what looks like a good piece of analysis. He notes that when gas prices went up 10 cents, average oil-company profits jumped from 37 to 87 percent. Also explains why companies like Amoco and Arco show much smaller profits than some other oil giants: they have smaller foreign operations and consequently must pay up to twice as much for their oil on spot market. Cut to Jack Morris, Gulf Oil spokesman, who says not to draw conclusions from one-quarter profit figures. A second report, from Jim McManus on Capitol Hill, says Senate Energy Committee is outraged over profit figures. Cut to three senators expressing said outrage at considerable length. McManus ends with short explanation of Carter's windfall-profits tax; notes that, even if it were already in effect, it wouldn't have cut oil profits. Cronkite ends segment with short bit on final Congressional passage of standby gas-rationing bill.

**NBC.** Like CBS, NBC chooses not to lead with oil profits today. Unlike CBS, it gives the story very little time at all. Report covers same ground as yesterday (i.e., profits from foreign sales and OPEC price rises). High point: Mike Jensen gives helpful breakdown of what a boost in OPEC prices means in terms of running your car and heating your home. No outside sources are presented.

**ABC.** As if to atone for yesterday's thin coverage, ABC devotes virtually

controls and the windfall-profits bill. When it was time for New Jersey Democratic congressman Andrew Maguire to ask the questions, he held up a three-foot "No decontrol" postcard (sent to him by one of his constituents) and began charging the oil industry with bilking the public. Tavoulaareas listened for a bit, then angrily left the hearing room.

What got on the air? As described later in *The Los Angeles Times*: "ABC's *World News Tonight* focused on the confrontation between the combative oil man and the grandstanding congressman, all but ignoring the substance of Mobil's testimony."

Reporters who have to cover oil on a daily basis don't discount TV's lust for

the sensational story—what oil people call "confrontation journalism"—but they also point out that the petroleum industry often has only itself to blame for inadequate coverage. Mobil, for example, has had a reputation for refusing to grant television interviews unless it is able to edit them afterward—a precondition no self-respecting reporter will accept. At the same time the company reportedly was refusing interviews, it was taking out full-page newspaper ads lambasting TV coverage.

Of late, Mobil seems to be softening its approach. The honey jar may be replacing the vinegar bottle. "They seem to be wooing us now," says Dan Cordtz, who sometimes reports on oil stories

for ABC. "Since they announced their first-quarter profits for 1980 they seem to talk to anyone with a camera."

Much of the tension that exists between the petroleum industry and TV has a which-came-first-the-chicken-or-the-egg knot in it. The oil people believe they've been burned in the past so they're leery of cooperating; reporters, in turn, believe they're denied access to crucial information and consequently must go on the air lacking the facts and figures they really need.

Says Ray Brady of CBS, "There are certain figures [oil companies] just don't give out—like those on the pricing of products as they go from one affiliate of a company to another. Hell, it took the Shah of Iran 15 years to get a

all of the opening segment of *World News Tonight* (approximately four minutes) to Congressional passage of the standby gas-rationing bill. (Interestingly, this is the oil story to which CBS gave least play today. Some knowledgeable reporters consider it a non-story since the "standby" nature of the bill leaves it with little real chance of being implemented in the near future.) Energy correspondent Roger Peterson follows with discussion of Gulf's profits. Says U.S. regulatory changes increased Gulf's earnings and that the company doesn't apologize for big numbers since it's reinvesting more than it's earning. This is the first story on any of the networks to point out in a fairly detailed way that not all oil-company profits were made overseas. Short exchange between Peterson and Gulf spokesman L. Hill Bonin on this subject.

### Wednesday, Oct. 24

**CBS.** Five companies announce profits: Mobil, Sohio, Sun (up 65 percent), Citgo (up 64 percent), Marathon (up 58 percent). *Evening News* opens with two substantial reports. Ray Brady presents the first analysis on any of the networks of what might be called the "anti-industry" viewpoint. He describes how American consumers end up paying higher prices because of what, in bookkeeping terms, are considered "foreign" profits. Two quick cuts to back up this position: British oil-industry analyst Martin Beudell and Edwin Rothschild of the Energy Action Education Foundation.

In the second CBS report, Nelson

Benton reports on Congressional vote to maintain price controls. Quick cuts to three congressmen: two in favor of controls, one against. Cronkite finishes segment with short reports on progress of two pending Congressional bills: one to help poor people pay for heat, the other to foster energy conservation and development of synthetic fuels.

**NBC.** Only a very short piece buried in the program. Chancellor says Congress has voted "decisively" to keep gas price controls. (Benton, over on CBS, says in his report the vote is not at all decisive. It is only a temporary victory for the pro-regulation forces and will not likely be sustained.) Chancellor then reports earnings percentages of the most profitable companies reporting today—Sohio and Mobil. Ignores figures for firms with lower profit percentages. No on-air reports from any correspondents. One quick cut to Administration inflation counselor Alfred Kahn condemning our "bondage to the world oil cartel."

**ABC.** Frank Reynolds reports earnings percentages for all five companies announcing today. Leads into Brit Hume piece (90 seconds) on Congressional vote to sustain gas controls. Quick cuts to four congressmen: two for, two against. (Three of them are the same ones who appeared on CBS.) Report gets low play—halfway through the show.

**A footnote.** The Public Broadcasting Service does not compete with the networks head-to-head on evening news, but during this week of October

1979 it came up with what was probably the longest (and, arguably, the best) report on oil profits. PBS let the oil-company figures build up during the week. Then on Friday, Oct. 26, *The MacNeill/Lehrer Report* devoted its full length to the story. For half an hour Robert MacNeil and Jim Lehrer discussed the issue with Samuel Schwartz, Conoco's senior vice president for administration; Robert Levine, one of the founders of the National Association of Petroleum Investment Analysts and a vice president at E. F. Hutton; and Rep. Bob Eckhardt (D—Texas), chairman of the House Commerce Committee's Oversight and Investigation Subcommittee, which had focused on supplies and prices of oil.

Who wins? Probably no one. Certainly not the viewer. Network coverage during this week showed many of the flaws that critics of TV complain about. Sensational-profits reports were highlighted, while less spectacular earnings reports were overlooked. Despite occasional attempts at analysis, the rhetorical flourishes by folks on both sides of the issue seemed to get most coverage.

If you had a couple of videocassette recorders and were able to see *all* the oil coverage that week, you might have emerged with a glimmer of understanding. On the other hand, the apparent contradictions and differences in emphasis may have left you more confused than ever.

Oil, it seems, is indeed a slippery story.

look at the oil companies' books ... and that was back in the days when he had life-and-death power over their operations in his country."

**M**any in the oil industry, however, charge that TV reporters misuse the figures they do get and that supplying more will only make matters worse. They point out that TV invariably reports on the profits of oil companies in terms of percentages, which can sometimes be misleading. ("If we had a \$1 profit last year," one oil executive noted, "and a \$2 profit this year, we'd have a 100-percent increase in profits, but we'd still be broke.")

Dan Cordtz agrees that there's pressure in TV news departments to focus on "big profits." The ABC correspondent once went on the air with a story that broke the cost of a gallon of gas into its constituent parts. He found that, even if one removed all oil-company profit from the equation, gas would only cost about five cents a gallon less than it does now. "I took a lot of ribbing from my colleagues around here after that one," Cordtz says. "Everybody came up to me saying 'What is this? Be-kind-to-oil-companies week?'"

Still, it does seem to be the case that many in the oil industry either don't understand how a TV reporter works, or—if they do understand—resent having to tailor their responses to the reporter's needs. Oil company public-relations executives complain about TV's need for immediate responses and about its use of heavily edited interviews. They don't, for example, like having to provide an instant rejoinder to a Presidential energy message (which, of course, probably took a large Presidential staff weeks or months to prepare). They say that the brush TV paints with is too broad.

While many oil executives agree that they would be more comfortable with TV if it expanded its format, some media observers point out that industry practice doesn't always reflect that sentiment. Last June 3, for example, NBC telecast an hour-long special on energy. One 13-minute segment (long by television standards) was a panel discussion. The panelists included John O'Leary, then deputy secretary of the Department of Energy; Rene Ortiz, secretary-general of OPEC; and James Flug, a well-known consumerist critic of the oil industry. NBC asked the chief executive officers of Texaco, Mobil, Shell, Exxon, Gulf, Aramco, Arco and Amoco to appear. All refused.

In similar fashion, industry executives turned down requests to appear

on *The David Susskind Show*. All, that is, except Charlie Kittrell.

Charles Kittrell, executive vice president at Phillips Petroleum, threatens to do for oil what Frank Perdue has done for the chicken—make it a friendly member of the family. Kittrell loves to talk to media folks and he speaks in the eager, folksy, "pleased-to-meet-ya," down-home tones of a Lyndon Johnson or a John Connally.

Among reporters, Phillips is generally credited with having the most responsive public-relations operation in the oil industry. When you call the average oil PR. man and ask him to set up an interview, he may do it, but you

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●● There's nothing like a gasoline line or an embargo to get your story on the air. ●●

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are likely to get the feeling that he proceeds with extreme caution. When you place a blind call to Phillips, you get an enthusiastic "Boy, have I got the guy for you," and 10 minutes later Charlie Kittrell is on the line.

Kittrell has appeared on everything from *Good Morning America* to public television's *MacNeill/Lehrer Report* and a flock of local shows in between.

"I have no complaints on how I've been treated," he says. "I don't mind if they ask incisive questions. I figure that just gives me a chance to come back with incisive answers."

If there is a communications gap between oil and television, the blame for it, Kittrell feels, rests largely with his industry. "We have to recognize that there's a difference in what you can accomplish with different media. We feel intimidated when we have to summarize for TV. But we're going to have to learn how to summarize. Unless we can help TV get our message across, we're going to leave the field open to the opposition."

TV has another unabashed champion in Dan Lundberg, publisher of the highly respected trade publication, the *Lundberg Letter*. At any given moment, Lundberg probably knows more about the gasoline situation than anyone else

in the oil industry. And he endorses TV coverage of his field without reservation.

"I don't believe news on TV is superficial or truncated," Lundberg says. "In TV, experts sift through all the news and extract what's most important. A newspaper might print a story with more depth, but that doesn't mean the average person reads it; the average reader reads the headline, maybe the first sentence of most stories, then goes on to another story. On TV, the viewer probably gets at least four sentences and some pictures. So, for all practical purposes, television delivers more."

Others involved in this issue are not so sanguine about TV's ability to serve up the most important oil stories. Daniel Yergin, an energy expert at Harvard who has studied press coverage of energy, sees the editors and producers of TV news shows as major stumbling blocks. Top-notch reporters, he says, have become extremely knowledgeable and sophisticated but they have to sell their stories to editors who are less well-informed. "Consequently," says Yergin, "TV still gets off on colorful, emotional tangents that are irrelevant to the real issue."

Yergin's criticism of editors and producers elicits a sigh of recognition from some reporters. Nelson Benton, of CBS, for instance, says the stiff competition among correspondents to get stories on the air means that research-and-development stories and interpretive pieces usually fall by the wayside. "I always say there's nothing like a gasoline line or an embargo to get your story on the air," he says.

**W**hile television's internal structure may create a bias against deep discussion of issues, it's also true that the petroleum industry's public relations have left a lot to be desired. Observers note that the oil companies' traditional distrust of their own PR. people has hamstrung contacts with television. Oil is an inbred industry. It is run by people who more than likely started out as geologists or engineers. Not only do they often feel uncomfortable with reporters, they often feel just as queasy around their own public-affairs specialists. "All the bosses sound like they came out of the same pea patch in Texas or Oklahoma," says Ray Brady. "And they don't quite trust their own PR. men, whom they view as effete Easterners."

Brady also thinks that those who speak for oil often hurt their own case by trying to prepackage a specific mes-

*continued on page 92*



# Has Pay-Cable Got Packages for You!

As more and more homes are wired, industry heavyweights are outdoing themselves with bold schemes to lure the viewer's dollar

By PETER FUNT

**A** sure sign that competition within an industry is about to explode is when members of that industry begin publicly acknowledging each other's presence. In the field of pay-cable television, the fuse was ignited a few months ago when the major pay networks launched a series of ads in trade publications that all of a sudden named names.

The number-three pay network, The Movie Channel, made the boldest pitch. "What HBO and Showtime won't show you," its ad screamed in heavy black type. "Sure they'll show you mov-

ies, but they won't show you movies and nothing but movies 24 hours a day. Only The Movie Channel can show you that."

The number-two network, Showtime, tried an approach that conceded, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. "What's HBO without Showtime?" its ad asked. "Not as entertaining. Not as broadly appealing. And not nearly as profitable."

The number-one network, Home Box Office—the aforementioned HBO—used its ad to call the other pay services copycats. "Thursday, April 17, 1980," the ad copy began. "Hundreds of thou-

sands of HBO subscribers across the country have switched on their TV sets and settled in to watch one of the year's best movies—Warren Beatty in 'Heaven Can Wait.' HBO subscribers who also bought Showtime, however, had a choice: On that date they could watch 'Heaven Can Wait' on HBO. Or 'Heaven Can Wait' on Showtime. And those who subscribe to HBO, Showtime and The Movie Channel could have chosen between 'Heaven Can Wait,' 'Heaven Can Wait' and 'Heaven Can Wait.'"

All three trade ads touch on sensitive

issues confronting the volatile pay-cable industry. The Movie Channel is reminding cablecasters that theatrical motion pictures are what pay-cable viewers seem to want most. Showtime is reminding the industry that many viewers now seem to want more pay programming than any one channel can provide. HBO is reminding its competitors that product duplication is still the biggest problem holding the other networks back. And with these ads, all three pay-cable giants are reminding the outside world that their competition may soon erupt into the biggest battle television has ever seen.

Pay-cable emerged during the 1970s when it was discovered that Americans would actually *pay* to receive a special channel of noncommercial "premium" programming—mostly recent theatrical films, nightclub acts and concerts. But with the supply of films drying up, and with most cable systems now offering at least one pay channel, the pay-cable networks face two big unknowns during the 1980s: First, will viewers be as eager to pay for more conventional TV shows as they are for theatrical films? And second, will a sizable number of cable viewers pay additional monthly charges in order to receive two, three or even more pay-cable channels?

**S**everal recent developments on the pay-cable front are bound to produce more definitive answers to these questions:

- Getty Oil, in a joint venture with four major Hollywood film studios—Columbia Pictures, 20th Century-Fox, MCA Inc. and Paramount Pictures—has announced a new pay-cable network called Premiere, due to begin service early next year. If antitrust challenges can be thwarted, Premiere will have exclusive rights for satellite distribution of all films produced by the four studios for nine months after the theatrical run concludes. (Among the current titles potentially available to Premiere are "Kramer vs. Kramer" and "All That Jazz.") This would force all other pay-cable networks to increase their own nontheatrical programming sharply.

- On Aug. 1, Time Inc. launches a new pay-cable network called Cinemax, designed as a companion to the com-

pany's highly successful HBO. This is the Nation's first pay network intended specifically for viewers who want more than one full-service (or "maxi") pay channel.

- Meanwhile, HBO dropped its "mini" (or secondary) family pay network, Take-2, on July 31. This move has boosted the fortunes of an independent mini service called Home Theater Network. HTN already has twice as many customers as Take-2 had and is angling for a bigger share of the pay-TV pie.

- Showtime recently redesigned its schedule and beefed up its original programming as part of a campaign to get cable systems to run Showtime *plus* HBO, rather than choosing one or the other.

**O**f all these developments, it is the coming of Premiere, formally introduced at the National Cable Television Association convention in Dallas last May, that may have the greatest effect. HBO, Showtime and The Movie Channel all insist that Premiere will never get off the ground, and the rhetoric is flying thick and fast. In Dallas, HBO chairman N.J. (Nick) Nicholas insisted, "There is absolutely no way Premiere will be on the air next year," while Sidney Sheinberg, president of MCA, one of Premiere's participating suppliers, declared, "There is no way we won't be on the air next year." "We don't think this venture can be lawfully implemented," stated HBO's president, Jim Heyworth. "We view it as a per se violation of antitrust laws. We're not averse to having another competitor, as long as that competitor has access to films the same way we do." Ever since the Getty project was announced, HBO and Showtime have had armies of lawyers camped out at the Justice Department in Washington to block a Premiere premiere.

Even if the new network clears all the legal hurdles, it may encounter some resistance within the cable community itself. In Dallas, the NCTA's executive board announced it had "serious questions as to whether Premiere's game plan was competitive or anticompetitive" for the industry. But Thomas Wertheimer, a vice president with MCA, said, "We're not here to go to war

with the NCTA. We want very much to be a part of this industry." Wertheimer insisted that the new network would be "procompetitive," and would offer "a different service from our competitors."

This frenzied competition is remarkable for an industry that did not even exist at the start of the Seventies and did not become profitable until late in the decade. HBO, the Nation's first pay-cable service, began in 1972 as a humble experiment for 365 cable subscribers in Wilkes-Barre, Pa. The following year HBO was acquired by Time Inc., but by Jan. 1, 1976, the network's subscriber total was still a modest 250,000. Today, however, thanks to aggressive promotion and advances in satellite distribution, HBO is seen in more than four million homes spread across all 50 states.

HBO's chief competitor, Showtime, began as a regional pay service in northern California in mid-1976 and expanded to national distribution in 1978. Now operated jointly by Teleprompter Corp. and Viacom International Inc., Showtime has about 1.2 million customers. Trailing Showtime are The Movie Channel—formerly known as Star Channel—from Warner Communications and American Express, now seen in some 400,000 homes, and a Spanish-language pay network known as Galavision, with about 20,000 subscribers.

**T**hese pay networks were all designed during a time—just a few years ago—when it was assumed that viewers would never want more than one pay channel. As a result, ordering a pay service from your local cable company was the same as ordering milk in a restaurant: since restaurants only carry one brand of milk, you don't order Sunshine Farms Milk, you just say "milk." In situations like these, suppliers are more concerned with winning the affections of the retailer than they are with pleasing the consumer. But recently, cable systems have given up the restaurant approach and are becoming more like supermarkets: if you want a pay network, take your pick from whatever is on the shelf.

One of the first communities in the Nation to experiment with so-called

## On the Local Scene...

All of the pay-cable networks mentioned in the accompanying report are distributed to cable systems by satellite, thus making them full nationwide services. But scattered across the country are numerous other pay services produced regionally and distributed by telephone line, by microwave or on tape to clusters of cable systems. As pay-cable proliferates, these services, too, are becoming important in the overall pay-television picture.

In New York City, Teleprompter offers its subscribers a homemade action-adventure pay channel called Uptown. This service is sometimes granted early access to theatrical films because distributors usually give films a New York run prior to national distribution.

TeleMine Co., Inc., is currently promoting an action-adventure service called Impact Theatre in several scat-

tered markets, with hopes of someday going nationwide. Another action-adventure channel, known as Bravo, is supplied to systems owned by a Denver-based cable company, Daniels & Associates, and already has a few outside subscribers as well.

Some regional cable companies specialize in soft porn and other types of adult entertainment. International Cable of Buffalo, N.Y., for instance, has its own late-night feature, Adult Cinema.

Other large regional pay services include Prism, which began in the Philadelphia area and is now being marketed by 50 cable companies. It features a blend of films and professional sports. California has several such services, including Theta Cable's "Z" Channel and ON-TV, an over-the-air subscription television service which is also offered in some cable subscribers' packages.—P.F.

dual-pay services was Thibodaux, La., where HBO and Showtime were introduced together nearly two years ago. As expected, HBO proved to be more popular with consumers, if for no other reason than that it spends so much money on national promotion. But of the 106 viewers who signed up for pay-cable when it was first offered, 25 decided to take *both* HBO and Showtime.

**T**his development was good news for cable operators, since adding a second pay channel is a speedy way to boost revenues without altering basic-cable rates. The dual-pay phenomenon was also a boon for Showtime and The Movie Channel, which had been squeezed out of many systems that offered HBO as their only pay network. As newer systems tried dual-pay offerings, the results were encouraging. Council Bluffs, Iowa, for example, found that 84 percent of pay-cable customers wanted both HBO and The Movie Channel. In San Antonio, Texas, 77 percent of pay viewers wanted both HBO and Showtime. Several other communities, such as Monmouth, N.J., tried selling *three* pay channels and found that the saturation was still quite high: 40 percent of pay subscribers in Monmouth ordered HBO,

Showtime and Home Theater Network.

One cable service, the Sammons system in Glendale and Burbank, Cal., has offered no less than *five* pay channels at once: Showtime; HBO; Take-2; a local pay-cable service called "Z" Channel; and ON-TV, an over-the-air subscription-TV service. The cost for all five, plus basic cable and expanded basic, plus a converter box, is \$63.29 per month, and Sammons says a few subscribers have purchased the whole shooting match. And, Sammons says it is "considering" adding The Movie Channel, Cinemax and Galavision.

The cable community rejoiced over the prospect of selling multi-pay "tiers" to vast numbers of cable customers. Especially pleasing were statistics indicating that viewers in newer cable systems were more inclined to take multiple services than customers in older systems where extra services were added. Since cable construction across the country continues at an almost recession-proof pace, prospects for big profits in these "new builds" seemed even more promising.

**B**ut, it turned out, there was one big catch. The major pay networks all carry essentially the same top theatrical films, and their program

guides suffer from what might be called the Time-Newsweek syndrome. Last April, for example, viewers seeing Warren Beatty's angelic "Heaven Can Wait" grin on the cover of the program guides of HBO, Showtime, The Movie Channel and Home Theater Network probably felt like telling their cable company to go to hell. (For a network-by-network comparison of pay-cable programming, see page 62.) While viewers want more pay choices, they may not stand for too much pay duplication.

**W**arner Amex was one of the first suppliers to respond to this situation by changing its Star Channel network to The Movie Channel—the Nation's first 24-hour pay service. This was a gamble, because conventional wisdom within the pay-TV industry holds that viewers will not readily pay for extra program hours that they can't possibly watch. Also, expanded hours on a pay network usually mean more reruns, not more titles, and pay viewers complain that rerun levels are already too high.

Nevertheless, Warner Amex felt that as HBO and Showtime increased their original programming, The Movie Channel would become an attractive add-on for viewers who want more movies.

Showtime, for its part, geared up to take advantage of the dual-pay market by expanding its schedule from eight to about 12 hours a day (14 on weekends), by bringing lesser-known films into the schedule with "umbrella" categories such as "Family Features" and "Action and Romance," and by increasing original programming. "I've always felt that eventually the pay networks would have to form their own identities through original programs," states Jeffrey Reiss, Showtime's former president and now executive vice president of the Viacom Entertainment Group, Showtime's parent organization. "Although theatrical films will continue to be the backbone of the schedule, consumers will probably decide which pay channels to buy based on differences in original programs."

Reiss's interest in nontheatrical programming is sure to be heightened next year if Getty's new Premiere net-

work succeeds in making top films as scarce as one of Getty's other products, oil. Yet there are serious doubts about whether Showtime—or any other pay network—can afford to grind out original programming that matches the standards set by the commercial networks. And even if it can be done, will viewers pay for it?

One of Showtime's new attractions for fall is a variety program with Johnny Carson's sidekick Ed McMahon as host. Why on earth would people pay to watch an Ed McMahon variety show? Jeffrey Reiss, who signed up McMahon for the show, claims the answer is, "Because on commercial TV Ed can't be as bold and risqué as he is off-stage or when he's doing his nightclub act."

**B**ut, Reiss's comments notwithstanding, the original fare on both Showtime and HBO often is not very original. In addition to the Ed McMahon show, Showtime has signed Ralph Nader to do a consumer series similar to the one produced by Consumers Union for HBO; Showtime is also pushing "an offbeat comedy series" called *Bizarre*, with John Byner, and something titled *The Best Joke I Ever Heard* with Hollywood reporter Army Archerd. In the best tradition of broadcast network competition, Showtime "stole" David Sheehan's gossip program, *Hollywood*, from HBO and has scheduled it for this fall. HBO, meanwhile, will try to cash in on last year's successful *Time Was* historical series with Dick Cavett by producing a similar six-part series called *Remember When*. And HBO has slated specials with two comics who are hardly new to television—Don Rickles and Rich Little.

Showtime officials have projected that by the end of this year the network will have increased its original programming to fill roughly 40 percent of its schedule. Since HBO already offers about 50 percent original fare, Showtime's ads in trade publications have been asking cable operators: "What's Scarlett without Rhett? What's a gorilla without a girl? What's HBO without Showtime?" The copy goes on to proclaim: "Like any great entertainment

## Vive What Difference?

Let's say you ordered cable service back in June from a system that offered the major pay networks—HBO, Showtime and The Movie Channel—and you decided to spend an extra \$25 or \$35 per month above your basic-cable charge to receive all three. What programs would be coming your way?

You probably would have been impressed as you flipped through the three program guides and discovered a total of about 100 theatrical films for the month—roughly 33 on each network. You might have wondered, though, why John Travolta and "Grease" were featured on the cover of both the HBO and The Movie Channel guides. Looking more carefully at the listings, you would discover that many of June's major titles were available on more than one channel: "The In-Laws" on both HBO and Showtime, "Death on the Nile" on Showtime and The Movie Channel, "The Deer Hunter" on The Movie Channel and HBO, and "Jaws 2" on Showtime and The Movie Channel.

Seeing "Jaws 2" on the cover of Showtime's June guide, you might have wondered why that film was carried by Showtime as well as The Movie Channel, but not by HBO—until you received the July listings. Then you would learn that not only was "Jaws 2" running on HBO in July, it was also brought back for additional plays on The Movie Channel and Showtime. Exactly the same was true of "The In-Laws," which The Movie Channel carried on a one-month

delay. The fact is, the longer you held on to all three services, the more obvious the movie duplication would be. "Grease," featured on HBO and The Movie Channel in June, crops up on Showtime in August. "The Champ," highlighted on HBO's and Showtime's schedules in July, is carried in August by The Movie Channel. Indeed, of the 13 new films on HBO's schedule in July, 12 had already been seen or would soon be available on at least one other pay channel. HBO's only "exclusive" was "Lady in Red," a New World film that, according to HBO's program department, "has lots of lurid gun battles, nudity, explosions and chases."

Digging more deeply into the program listings, you would come across some films—such as "One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest" on both HBO and Showtime—that you remembered seeing months ago on free network TV. Both The Movie Channel and Showtime scheduled *Centennial* in July. *Centennial*, you will recall, was an NBC miniseries in 1978-79.

In addition to theatrical and off-network films, both HBO and Showtime offer a mix of original programs. In June, for example, Showtime presented "The First Celebration of Country Comedy," an "upbeat, down-home gathering of laughs and music." HBO, meanwhile, offered "Nashville Country Pop Festival," featuring "some of the most famous country-pop folks and their award-winning songs." Showtime also continued its series of former Broadway

pair, HBO and Showtime together equal a great deal more than the sum of their parts."

Needless to say, the people at Time Inc. don't see it quite that way. For more than a year they surveyed subscribers in over 100 cable systems to determine how to crack the dual-pay market without Showtime's help. Interviews with those who were already buying more than one pay service confirmed that "greater variety" and "added convenience" were the primary reasons why people took HBO and Showtime, or

HBO and The Movie Channel. Researchers also spoke with viewers who started with two pay channels but downgraded to one. The greatest percentage, 59 percent, said they dropped one network because the movies were nearly all the same; 57 percent complained of too many repeats; but relatively few—36 percent—cut back because of cost. Next, HBO asked these same viewers what they would want in a second pay channel. 66 percent said a second network should offer completely different programs; 47 percent

productions with "The Robber Bridegroom," while HBO launched a special called "Show Stoppers," featuring "musical moments from Broadway's greatest musicals."

Rounding out HBO's original programming in June was an installment of the Consumer Reports series, this one focusing on medicine; the third in a series of adult versions of *Candid Camera*; a variety special with comedian Red Skelton; the rock group the Doobie Brothers in concert; a special on "The World's Great Escapes," hosted by Tony Curtis; plus women's gymnastics, highlights from old boxing matches, international high-diving competition, and coverage of the Wimbledon tennis championships.

Showtime's June lineup also featured *The Best Joke I Ever Heard* series with George Burns; Engelbert Humperdinck at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas; a special called "Don't Miss the Boat," with Jo Anne Worley and Rip Taylor; "Roasted Medium Rare," a "roast" of Henny Youngman; the magazine series *What's Up America*, featuring "three thousand Elvis impersonators"; and a concert by Smokey Robinson.

Unlike Showtime and HBO, The Movie Channel does not bother to schedule original programs. Similarly, the mini service Home Theater Network also limits its offerings to theatrical films, although HTN did run a John Davidson special once. How did HTN happen to acquire a special? It bought the rights from Showtime, of course. —P.F.

said it should have a longer telecast day. Other comments included a desire for a single program guide combining schedules for two networks, and staggered starting times for competing pay-cable programs.

HBO put all this data together and created Cinemax, known in-house as Max. The new network carries only theatrical films (although some original programming might be added later). None of the programming duplicates what HBO carries during any given month (although some titles will pop

up on one network a few months after playing on the other). Max's movie mix is aimed at narrower audience groups than HBO's, and features foreign titles, children's movies, classics and action-adventure films (although some "blockbusters" will be deliberately held off HBO for a few months and given their first play on the new service). And, as a nudge to consumers to take both networks, Cinemax's schedule is listed in a new combo guide alongside HBO's.

Showtime insists it isn't worried about the Cinemax challenge. "I don't think HBO's second service will be as good as our first service," Reiss says. "And with two networks they run the risk of splitting their attention." But in its pitch to cable operators, HBO counters such comments by noting that while all other networks are "foundation services," Cinemax is the first "complementary service."

HBO learned the hard way about "complementary services" with its Take-2 mini network, which was quietly dropped to make room for Max on the RCA satellite. Explains HBO's Jim Heyworth, "What we learned was that the majority of Take-2 subscribers were also HBO subscribers. We tried to come back and differentiate the programming on Take-2, but it just never measured up to our expectations."

Showtime has also failed to generate much enthusiasm for its mini service, Front Row. Unlike Take-2, which had its own program "feed" on a satellite transponder separate from HBO's, Front Row uses a switching system to provide its viewers only the G- and PG-rated films on Showtime while blocking out the R-rated movies and specials. To date, Front Row is only carried by 12 cable systems.

If any network can succeed in the mini-pay field, it will probably be Home Theater Network, a spunky David among the pay-cable Goliaths. HTN originates in Portland, Maine, where it was born three years ago as an alternative pay service for viewers who were offended by R-rated films carried on the major pay networks. HTN's philosophy is to offer just one or two G- and PG-rated films each night and to repeat

films on successive nights the way a movie theater does. To counter HBO's practice of giving first showings of films on weekends, HTN usually introduces its new titles on weeknights.

According to Steve Broydrick, an HTN vice president, "We quickly discovered that HTN is welcomed in many systems as a second pay service alongside HBO. In Louisville, we're doing very well (with 70 percent of cable viewers taking both HBO and HTN). I've been traveling around the country lately, spreading the gospel of multi-pay."

Since HTN—like The Movie Channel—has no original programming whatsoever, it too stands to suffer if Getty's Premiere network starts gobbling up movie titles some time next year. But says Broydrick, "We will be affected less [by Premiere] than the other networks. Most of our films come from United Artists, Warner and Disney, whereas HBO and Showtime are getting more than half of their feature films from the four studios involved [in the new venture]."

Clearly, the status of the Premiere network will be a major factor in determining the future shape of pay-cable TV during 1981. Meanwhile, the existing pay networks will continue to beef up original programming and sign up as many cable systems as possible.

Although *more* of something is not always the same as *better*, it does seem that stiff competition among the pay-cable suppliers will translate into improved service for pay-cable viewers. All pay networks should take note, however, of a fascinating statistic that emerged from HBO's survey of the dual-pay market. When asked why they purchased two pay channels, an incredible 30 percent of cable viewers answered that they never *realized* that's what they'd done! They thought they were simply buying a complete service known as "cable TV." And from this bit of research, HBO's New York City ad agency, Ted Bates Advertising, came up with a pay-cable postulate that ought to be tattooed on the forehead of every pay-cable executive. "The pay-cable customer," warns Bates, "will not remain naive forever." ■

# You'll See Them Nude in a Japanese Bath—

Examining the censorship of commercials is hardly a lesson in logic

By PAUL GOOD

It's that rare commercial, a delight to watch. Too bad you missed it. A beautiful woman on a handsome horse rides up to a macho man on a romantic beach. They embrace, and a viewer might imagine the question being asked, "Your beach or mine?" Then both are back on the horse and riding off toward a brilliant sun.

The couple are wearing jeans made by a famous manufacturer who paid a lot of money to hire the horse, the models and the crews to shoot the commercial. Perhaps the manufacturer did not have enough money left over to provide the man and woman with T-shirts. They are topless. And the reason why you missed this version of the commercial is because the TV powers-that-be wouldn't let you see the bare-backed riders, even though you never *really* see the lady bare-front.

At a time when TV programs are salty with adultery, double- and triple-entendres, with actors who make Gay Talese sound like Donald Duck, and actresses jiggling like Jell-O, it may come as a surprise to discover that commercials are required to be as wholesome as a Scout jamboree. But they are, and thus the networks, their affiliates and independent stations, generally operating under a Code of Conduct devised by the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), each year reject thousands of commercials submitted to their Standards and Practices departments for clearance.

Most don't make the airwaves because product claims are judged debatable or even fraudulent. But many others are barred solely because the S&P people feel that viewer sensibilities might be offended. Precisely who is being offended how much at any given time by what is shown, or who is deprived by what isn't, are questions in a class with "How high is up?"

Commercials have been barred for portraying a Jimmy Carter-type Presidential news conference where the subject was frozen pizza. One commercial was taken off the air because it offended an ethnic group, allegedly maligning Mexicans in order to sell a crunchy product that rhymes with "bandidos." But most troubles arise

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*Network censors nixed a bare-backed Jordache jeans commercial but approved a Citicorp*

over the human body, its functions and its ability to look terrifically sexy to another human body.

Commercials with frenetic hucksters who rant like maniacs, irritating adults and doing God knows what to children's perceptions of the free-enterprise system, have always been acceptable. But it wasn't until the early '70s that feminine-hygiene products were permitted to advertise and then only outside of prime time, although half the adult audience, at some time in life, has menstruated during the 8-to-10 P.M. period. The NAB (spelled

backwards, it's BAN) is currently reviewing such ads to see whether they offend the American Way of Life.

Seeming contradictions abound. That jeans commercial featuring the horsey set was judged unacceptable although the woman's breasts were covered, Godiva-like, by cascades of blonde hair or the horse's neck. Yet this summer, viewers across the country saw a Citicorp Travelers Checks commercial that showed an American couple in a Japanese bath along with a Japanese man. The clear message is that nobody has anything on, a point underlined by the woman's Oh-my-

# but Not Riding Topless into the Sunset



Travelers Checks ad whose mixed bathing was deemed clean of sexual overtones.

God-don't reaction when the Japanese man politely attempts to stand up and introduce himself. It's equally clear that the Japanese man doesn't have a yen for anyone in the tub, which, as we shall see, is why the commercial wasn't scrubbed.

It's this attempted mixture of Victorian morality and contemporary free styles that produces clearance standards that are either high or double, depending on your point of view. Anguished advertisers call it censorship. Some viewers think S&P people aren't tough enough. And broadcast-

ers, sounding remarkably like Lily Tomlin's telephone operator, Mrs. Earbore, say it's all a matter of taste.

"...Advertising messages should be presented in an honest, responsible and tasteful manner," declares the NAB Code.

The ABC S&P booklet boasts that its staff exercises "sound judgment on matters of good taste." At CBS a spokesman explains that "we have to be judge and jury on matters of taste." And NBC's executives talk of approving only "what management feels is tasteful."

An ancient Roman said *de gustibus*

*non disputandum*. He may have been right: there is no accounting for taste. But if he ever tried to clear a controversial commercial, his taste would be held accountable. One New York advertising man who has dealt with the networks on a daily basis for two decades, and who insists on anonymity, says: "Taste is where they really rip us off. It's a totally subjective area that varies from network to network, from station to station. They give no evidence to back up any decision they make. They say, 'We know what the taste of the American people is,' and they arbitrarily impose it on you. The problem is that the nets go out to communities across the country and they play to the absolute lowest common denominator of taste.

"Obviously, nobody wants to foul the air. But a manufacturer should be able to sell his product in the most effective way possible, so long as it's truthful. By their nature, certain products—say, a portable outhouse you can bring to the beach—are going to offend some people. Others require an erotic presentation. If perfume isn't about sex, what is it about? But broadcasters don't want to offend *anybody*, for two reasons. One, they want to maximize their listeners so they don't want to alienate them by springing a racy commercial surprise on them in mid-show. Second, they're scared of death of getting into license trouble with the FCC, and they figure if they act like goody-goods, Washington will let them alone.

"But with all that," he concludes, "there are maddening inconsistencies. Travel commercials can show girls in bikinis shaking their rears all over the place. But if a bra manufacturer wants to use a live model, she has to wear a leotard under the bra, for God's sake. Next thing, the dogs in the Alpo ads will be wearing pants."

While he feels strongly about commercial censorship, he does not feel strongly enough to let his name be used. At six other large agencies, people refused to talk even when promised anonymity.

"If word somehow got back to the clearance people," said one lady advertiser, "we could be singled out as troublemakers and they could find reasons to give us problems. I don't say they

●● The difficulty comes  
when a commercial  
crosses over the line of  
lure into leer. ●●

would. But they're the only wheel in town and this is a very sensitive area. There is so much involved."

What there is so much of is money. Making a 30-second spot can cost between \$30,000 and \$150,000. Running it one time on 30 seconds of prime time can easily cost \$140,000. A manufacturer trying to get his commercial into 76 million American homes feels understandably edgy when something as potentially arbitrary as taste may block or limit his sales pitch.

**F**or example, in 1977 a commercial featuring a long-legged blonde newcomer named Susan Anton lit up a controversy. In it, Anton slunk into a locker room where a male tennis player in shorts was waiting for the towel boy but instead encountered 5-foot-11-inches of all-out woman offering him what every red-blooded American male dreams of—a good cigar.

"Let Muriel turn you on," Anton purred, getting closer than this to him. "That is my desire." It was not the desire of CBS to run the commercial, turning it down for being—you guessed it—"tasteless." ABC and NBC thought it was tasty, and ran it.

"I didn't think there was anything objectionable about it," recalls NBC's S&P vice president Ralph Daniels, a frank sort who does not look censorious. "No nudity or double meanings. I think CBS was up-tight and unreasonable about it. In this business you can't just Disneyize everything. As my associate Leighton Seville—who's been at this much longer than I—says, the difficulty comes when a commercial crosses over the line of lure into leer.

"Being arbitrary, I grant you, is a danger. We realize that we have a lot of publics out there, and complaints go with the territory. But we have long experience dealing with our collective judgment of what management feels is tasteful. We do survey viewers, solicit their feedback. But if you're just gonna judge on the number of complaints or surveys, I can just phone in the job. Ultimately, we have to take personal responsibility for our judgments, which isn't to say we know what's right or wrong. But we do know how management wants to be perceived by the public. The limits of what's permissible ex-

pand all the time as the culture changes. I suppose we're a very conservative reflection of what's going on in the culture."

**D**aniels' vice presidential counterpart at CBS, Donn O'Brien, started his television career as an usher on Ed Sullivan's wholesome show. Today, he's a bluff, balding executive who displays in his office a framed H.L. Mencken quote that seems to reflect his censor's role: "The public...demands certainties; it must be told definitely and a bit raucously that this is true and that is false. But there *are* no certainties."

"Our main concern isn't to keep commercials off the air but to get them on," says O'Brien. "With the Anton ad, she lit his cigar and sort of started meandering around his body. We asked for minor changes and they wouldn't make them. Maybe the speed limit at NBC and ABC was 75, but ours is 65.

"Certainly there's a lot of subjectivity involved in decisions. We do a lot of jeans commercials today and you can't write rules saying you can't show a rear end. But you have to use taste so it's not salacious."

Even though all the networks subscribe to the NAB Code, taste calls differ because each net is free—up to a point—to interpret the code in its own style, and sex is a great divider.

"Sex has always been a sensitive issue in this country," says NAB vice president and Code Authority general manager Jerry Lansner. "So you always have a great deal of divided opinion, even though the Authority is made up of representatives from the industry. I might feel that a commercial is Code compliant and a Network might say, 'We still won't accept it.' We do serve as the central clearinghouse for national advertisers in three areas: children's toys and premiums, intimate personal products, and foods that involve claims about polyunsaturates and cholesterol. Of course, if an advertiser thinks a broadcaster is being unfair in, say, the taste area, he can come to us and we work with him to resolve the problem."

Wally Bregman, Playtex-USA president, replies, "Bra, humbug" to that claim.

"We wanted to use live models, without unappealing black leotards, on our bra and girdle commercials," he recounts. "They do it throughout Europe and nobody gets corrupted. We didn't want to display transparent bras that would show nipples, just present the garment in a natural way. The networks refused. So we went to the NAB and they agreed we could make a test.

"We spent half a million dollars, ran the commercials in certain areas and did a follow-up viewer survey. The acceptability was as good or better than with the leotards. Despite all the evidence, NAB said, 'You still have to prove to us this isn't in bad taste. Make more surveys.' I said to hell with it. There is a continuing double standard between the stuff they permit on programs and on commercials. Shows like *Soap* and *Three's Company* can murder taste and get away with it.

"Right now, it's a sellers' market," Bregman concludes, "so the NAB doesn't feel obliged to make things easier. But the nets are as avaricious as anyone else, so watch what happens if the market gets soft. Isn't it interesting that tampon ads first appeared during the mid-Seventies recession?"

**N**AB's Lansner replies: "Standards are in no way tied to economics. We felt public attitudes had changed sufficiently to accept women's personal products. In a heterogeneous society like ours, there's still a lot of conservatism concerning undergarments. Our policy is applied to men's shorts too. We looked at the Playtex results and read some of the figures differently, that's all.

"I can't comment on programming, because we are presently involved in a suit involving prime-time family-viewing standards. But generally, you can have more latitude in programming for two reasons. Plot and character development may dictate showing, for example, a woman in a bra, and an audience accepts it where it might object when it's used to sell a product. And a program is seen only once where a commercial may be seen 50 times. We feel it's important that broadcasters act responsibly in these areas to demonstrate to the FCC and the Government that there's no need for Federal regula-

●●Years ago, before they got successful and rich, ABC used to be a piece of cake. Now they can be as choosy as NBC or CBS. ●●

tion since self-regulation really works.”

A few weeks after Lansner's explanation, Merv Griffin devoted much of his late-afternoon show to lingerie models prancing around in their undies to the accompaniment of slavering commentary. Children and other corruptibles presumably were watching goggle-eyed, which apparently was fine with the NAB and FCC.

The FCC, while guardian of the airwaves that theoretically belong to all the people, actually has little or nothing to say about commercials and taste. The NAB's prohibitions that ban nudity in commercials—along with astrology, hard-liquor and firecracker ads—are strictly its own idea.

This torrent of tastefulness starts in the networks' S&P suites and is fed by independent clearance offices across the land. ABC's Alfred R. Schneider is the industry's senior censor, having been at it for nearly 20 years. Legally trained, he's a company V.P. and the most veteran member of the NAB's Code Review Board. Completing his second decade of battling against tastelessness, Schneider admits to being "a little tired" of it all.

"It becomes very difficult," he says, "balancing the interests of viewers, advertisers, affiliates and public-interest groups. The FCC says you must operate in the public interest, but no one can say for certain just what that is in taste matters. Years ago when I started, it meant you couldn't run a toilet-paper commercial. I remember in the mid-Sixties arguing before the Code Board that Preparation H should be acceptable because the medical problems of hemorrhoids outweighed objections. Now we're facing the issue of abortion and contraception ads, which are objectionable to many people—for moral or religious reasons, or simply because they don't want their children to see them and ask questions."

**T**he balancing act at ABC and the other networks is quite a production. Each has approximately 15 editors earning around \$25,000 who spend their working lives looking over commercials. Lots of commercials. About 50,000 proposals are submitted each year. Of these, only 5000 eventu-

ally make the air. Almost all are submitted in storyboard form, an outline of what the eventual cassette will look like. Editors reject five percent outright for flunking taste or product-claims standards. Sixty to 65 percent are returned for modification, with the remainder okayed immediately. But even after network approval, agencies may scrap them, contributing to that enormous attrition rate.

**H**ow were chances of interviewing editors and watching their taste buds in action? Nil, at all the nets.

"That would compromise our confidentiality with our advertisers," Schneider explains. "No one except our staff can ever see those story boards. But we have a very responsible cross section of editors: male and female, white and black, lawyers, sociologists, child experts. It provides checks and balances with no single narrow view predominating. On tough calls, I ultimately decide, but usually the editors alone clear or reject.

To which our anonymous adman comments: "That sounds good, but in reality you have relatively low-paid people making big-bucks decisions. Orders come down the line not to offend anybody in the country, so you think they'll risk a job for principles? And they have hang-ups. Some are gay, and sensitive to that in commercials; some may be hyper about the way women are depicted, etc. You try to get to know their proclivities and guess how they'll react. You try not to get their backs up by going over their heads to question their judgment.

"You also must have a feel for the network. Sometimes pure economics, not morality, dictates where a station draws the line. Years ago, before they got successful and rich, ABC used to be a piece of cake. They'd take anything. Now they can be as choosy as NBC or CBS. The basic attitude everywhere is that every agency is a cheat trying to sneak something through, so no matter what you give them there must be something wrong." He pauses, then adds, "And, that's somewhat true."

Schneider denies any relationship between ABC's taste and its bank account, and points to viewer mail as an indicator that the network must be

doing something right. "Out of 76 million homes, only 238 letters in six months," he says. "And half of them complaining about women's personal products being shown."

Down in Mississippi, the Rev. Donald E. Wildmon, head of the National Federation for Decency, laughs at Schneider's boast. "Of course they don't get many letters," says Reverend Wildmon, whose newsletter has 130,000 circulation and undetermined clout. "You're wasting time with the nets when you complain. You just get meaningless letters back. I know the media attitude toward me. I'm a fundamentalist, redneck, hellfire-and-damnation Southerner without any sense, right? They can call me anything they want, but my dollar's worth the same as anybody else's.

"So I and my people across America go straight to the advertisers to get action. When Noxzema was running those suggestive 'Take it all off' ads, which ran during ball games when a lot of youngsters were watching, we had a write-in to their Baltimore headquarters. They said they had tested the commercial in the market for acceptability, etc., and we wrote back. 'Well, we just won't purchase it.' A few weeks later it was removed."

**W**hy should a relatively small group be able to impose its tastes on everyone?

"It's a free country and if an advertiser wants to keep a commercial on, there's no way in the world I can make him pull it. But my money is my money. If your ad is vulgar or tasteless, I tell you I have the right to spend my money elsewhere. Right now there aren't too many commercials we object to. But what's making a lot of people angry are the personal-hygiene spots. Advertise them in the print media if you want, but you got small children watching TV."

The nets, aiming to please nearly everybody, sometimes are either painstakingly thorough or laughably ludicrous in their efforts to save viewers from perdition. Take that Japanese-bath commercial, for example. One S&P executive, who prefers to be nameless, explains how his network devoted the kind of attention to the tub sequence that the State Department

●●When we shot the  
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trouble. ●●

might lavish on a Sino-Japanese arms deal.

"We knew it would be precedent-setting to show these people together in a bath," he says, his face dead-serious. "Obviously, nobody had anything on."

"Policy prohibits depicting people together in a bath or shower," interrupted his assistant. "Even if they're married."

Aren't there shampoo commercials with a man and a woman, one in a shower and the other reaching in?

"They're always married," the assistant points out. "You can tell from the rings."

"Of course, you can't be certain if they're married to each other," the executive observes. "But in this case there was a cultural factor that could make mixed bathing acceptable. It wasn't erotic—even though they had no clothes on—but normal in the cultural context. What we didn't know was whether current Japanese mores permitted strangers of different sexes sharing a tub. We queried a man from Japan Air Lines who said that mixed baths were common before the war but partitions came in after. Apparently, it was still done in the countryside without partitions, but not in cities like Tokyo. We didn't want to offend the Japanese business community by perpetuating a myth. We suggested that the agency check with reputable experts like the Japanese consul general or the tourist office."

**H**onorable experts presented conflicting evidence, but top-level information from Japanese ad agencies suggested that bathing by the tubful was OK. The commercial was cleared, without consultations with then-premier Ohira. Each network, after its own tub probes, threw in the towel and accepted.

To get a final sense of how contradictory elements involved in clearance converge on one commercial, let's return to the opening scene and that bare-back jeans commercial. It's a study in broadcaster responsibility and arbitrariness contending with advertiser/agency behavior that mixes legitimate complaint with occasionally suspect protestations of innocence.

The jeans manufacturer was Jordache, whose multimillion-dollar garment-industry success is the living end.

Jordache ads originally had trouble in print, with their famous shot of a topless man and woman playing piggyback. Actually, it was more Twiggyback, since the woman's breasts appeared nonexistent.

"We deal with a sensual product but the sexiness of Jordache is wide open, not animal-like," claims marketing v.p. Will Gagen. "But The New York Times turned down the ad. We asked why; they hedged and finally said the couple were smiling as if they were enjoying something. We reshot without smiles and they took it. Apparently The Times' criteria is you can be sexy, but don't enjoy it."

**J**ay Goldberg, account executive at Winner Communications Inc., picks up the TV part of the tale: "When we shot the topless rider, we had no reason to believe that such a classically beautiful commercial could spell trouble," he says. "The breasts of the model, Finele Carpenter, were always covered except for maybe one-thousandth of a second where you might see something if you ran it slow-mo. At the same time, we shot a second version with a shirt on."

Why, if trouble with the Code wasn't expected?

"Well," Goldberg explains, metaphorically mixing his anatomy, "in the back of our minds we thought we better cover our tail just in case."

Jordache planned to run the commercial, estimated to cost around \$50,000, in more than a dozen cities, starting with New York. The New York network affiliates said no but three New York independents—Channels 5, 9 and 11—briefly gave it air time along with some Los Angeles stations. New York's WABC-TV told Goldberg: "Implied nudity, as well as actual nudity, is unacceptable under the taste standards of WABC-TV." ABC network executive Julie Hoover says that soap-and-shower nudity is acceptable because "it's understood in its context, similar to a baby with its diaper down compared with an adult with a bare bottom. No one takes offense at a baby's bottom, but it was clearly established that the riders were naked above the waist and that could be offensive."

WCBS-TV and WNBC-TV reasoned approximately the same way. Within a

few days, the commercial also disappeared from the three independents that had accepted it. Why? Was there follow-the-leader industry pressure? Marty Feinberg, president of Winner Communications, answers evasively. "We just didn't want to run it any more, so we pulled it off. There were no problems. Why we pulled it I don't recall. I think it ran as long as we wanted it to."

But another Winner agency source says that at least one of the independents "got a lot of irate phone calls and panicked. Then we decided to scrap it because if it has trouble in liberal New York, it will have trouble everywhere." Channels 9 and 11 ducked questions from PANORAMA. Clearance boss Muriel Reis at Channel 5 has a curious answer: "The Jordache ad somehow ran by mistake. But it was removed by mutual agreement once the flap became known. We subscribe to the NAB Code and they do a good job. We get very few listener complaints."

Channel 5 carried the Japanese tub commercial. Did that pose any nudity conflict with the Code?

"No," she replies. "For one thing, the couple are married. And the people have bathing suits on."

Without a snorkeler's report, how does she know that?

"Well," she says, "I just assume that under that water there are bathing suits."

Over at NBC, Leighton Seville assumes the opposite. "Nudity in a hot tub is very logical, certainly in the Orient. There's nothing ugly about nudity if it's placed in a natural circumstance and not used to titillate or excite. But the matter of riding bareback in the Jordache spot takes on a whole other matter of taste."

**T**he story of the uneasy riders had a happy ending. Model Carpenter wound up marrying the commercial's director, Lou La Monte, at a chic party in Central Park's Tavern-on-the-Green. The "topmore" version of the commercial rode the airwaves across America, albeit leaving some unresolved questions behind. Ahead are controversies over contraceptives, abortion—and, perhaps, naked statues. Commercials, in fact, may become more interesting than the programs around them. ■

# Going for the Yankee Funny Bone

Offbeat British comedians are giving American TV a saucy new look

By ROGER DIRECTOR

**P**ut a man in a dress in front of a British audience and you have a guaranteed laugh. Put a man in a dress in front of an American audience and you have an Andy Warhol movie.

That, anyway, exemplifies the conventional wisdom, which states that, in matters of comedy, the United States and England are more than an ocean apart. Why, then, is a middle-aged British gent who regularly appears in drag among the hottest comics on American TV?

The chap's name is Benny Hill. And he is just the most prominent of a breed of Britons—including Dave Allen, the two Ronnies (Barker and Corbett) and the members of the Monty Python ensemble—who are successfully transplanting their brand of humor to American television.

When U.S. viewers in want of a saucy giggle switch on Hill, they spy an amalgam of the apple-cheeked licentiousness of Jonathan Winters, the outrageous campiness of a male Bette Midler, the warmth of Bob Hope, Jack Benny's timing, as many personae as Red Skelton's and the moment-to-moment audience control of Johnny Carson.

In Hill's half-hour shows, which generally feature vignettes stitched together from several of his original British hour-long programs, he serves up a saucy shepherd's pie of horny old gents, needle-happy doctors and rump-rubbing patients, bumbling and Hirohito-toothed TV announcers and ruffle-shirted band singers crooning ditties with lyrics about dubious virtue. His skits range leer and far, from pool matches to Westerns to bits about prisoner-of-war camps, but they are almost always peppered with skirts-high dam-

*That's no woman, that's British comic Benny Hill and a staple of his act—appearing in drag.*





*"We're all dealing with the same material actually," says Benny Hill, shown here in Mountie regalia. "The difference is only in the delivery."*

sels and cheeky propositions. There's usually as much lingerie on display as you'd see on a bawdyhouse clothesline.

**T**he physical comedy and sight gags are rather risqué for American commercial television, but Benny Hill gets away with it—so much so that his show has become a trade phenomenon. *The Benny Hill Show* first appeared on New York's WOR-TV in April of 1979, following earlier and wildly successful stints in Miami, Cleveland and Philadelphia. Since then, the program has been bought by stations in over 50 markets around the country. In Los Angeles, *Benny* generated record ratings for KCOP in the 11 P.M. time period. Last New Year's Eve, KTVU in San Francisco put together a two-hour special of Hill's programs, for which 55-year-old Benny taped a special introduction. In an improbable 7:30 time slot in New York, the show has been matched in a syndication slugfest with no less a programming challenger than *All in the Family*. Benny has held his own. "We hoped for good ratings, but nothing like we got," says WOR's Bob Fennimore, echoing station executives around the U.S.

The transoceanic success of *The Benny Hill Show* (it's also gangbusters in West Germany, Italy, Poland, Switzerland, Canada and the ever-lighthearted kingdom of Jordan—about two dozen countries) has two main causes. The first was the successful "British invasion" of the dramatic-series form a decade ago. That onslaught, according to John Fitzgerald of D. L. Taffner, Ltd., *Benny Hill's* U.S. distributor, "made viewers more receptive to a varied diet of programming fare." The second was the popularity enjoyed by the acclaimed comedy series, *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, a BBC production distributed by Time-Life to PBS stations here in 1974.

*"This is no time for complacency. There are still plenty of things that are*

“There are differences between the senses of humor in England and America, but they’re the same as the differences between New York and Milwaukee.”

not on top of other things. If there is one thing not on top of another thing, our society will be nothing more than a meaningless society of men gathered together for no good purpose.”—Address by the president of the Royal Society for Putting Things on Top of Other Things. From Monty Python.

After the Pythons’ ground-breaking programs, public television subsequently presented a clutch of other British comedy shows. *Fawlty Towers* starred Monty Python’s John Cleese. Another Python grad, Michael Palin, starred in *Ripping Yarns*, shown on PBS in 1979. Currently, in addition to *Monty Python* reruns, many PBS stations broadcast another British comedy hit, *The Two Ronnies* (Barker is the stout one, Corbett the little one), which is basically a *Bob and Ray* facsimile. *The Two Ronnies* was written by, among others, Cleese, fellow Pythoner Eric Idle and Marty Feldman. (A few of Feldman’s shows, entitled *The Marty Feldman Comedy Machine*, appeared briefly on ABC in 1972 with little success.)

Unlike its compatriots, *Benny Hill* represents a commercial breakthrough for British TV comedy here. And Hill’s success has persuaded station managers to try out other shows. This summer, Taffner is distributing a program entitled *After Benny, Thames Presents*, on which Hill’s introduction opens a program of skits starring other British comedians, such as Tommy Cooper. And Mobil Oil is sponsoring a package of British shows, both comedy and noncomedy, on commercial TV that includes Kenny Everett, an English disc jockey turned TV performer.

Already on commercial television, but less successful than *The Benny Hill Show*, has been burlesque-based *Carry On Laughing*, starring members of the familiar “Carry On” films, including the late Sid James. Then there is *Dave Allen at Large*, which follows *Benny Hill* in many markets around the country. It’s slower and not as effective

as *The Benny Hill Show*, but Allen is a superb storyteller with a Kovacsian eye for the absurd. A skit in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp, à la “The Bridge on the River Kwai”: Allen, the sneering Japanese colonel, screams at the prisoners, “You will build the railroad or be taken out and shot!” They cite the Geneva Convention to no avail; finally, they agree to build—the colonel’s model trains.

In another skit, a man with wings attached to his arms stands on a hilltop. He flaps the wings to a cheering send-off from onlookers and runs down the hill, struggling to lift off. Unfortunately, he never gets off the ground; instead, he stops at the bottom of the hill and picks up a gigantic earthworm in his mouth.

Even more British TV yuksters are promised. With the sluice gates now open even to hours of Brazilian and Japanese shows on American TV, and efforts underway to bring back Wayne and Shuster (Raise the Titanic!) from Canada, who knows what will come bouncing off the ionosphere and smack dab into your startled Quasar next month?

Have *Benny, Monty* and friends shattered a myth that TV comedy cannot span different cultures? Some say the answer is yes. “There are differences between the senses of humor in England and America,” says Taffner’s Fitzgerald, “but they’re the same as the differences between New York and Milwaukee.”

Well, it may be true that the imports have bridged some of the presumed difference in taste. The British comedians, of course, do not feel there is a great gulf between audiences. “People are people, and humor, if it is based on a situation common to them, will make them laugh,” says Dave Allen. “If you localize—say, if a British comedian talks about motorways to an American audience that knows them as turnpikes—it becomes difficult. But if you talk about childhood, marriage, religion, habits,

politics, it is humorous.”

“I don’t think there is a difference in the senses of humor,” says Benny Hill. “There isn’t that much of a difference between the British and the French or the British and the American. My French isn’t very good, but whenever I’m watching a French comic I can understand him as well as I can understand anybody else, because I’m watching to find the end of the joke. I think I know all 28 champagne jokes there are in the world. We’re all dealing with the same material actually. The difference is only in the delivery.”

American actress Elaine Stritch agrees. She had a successful English sitcom called *Two’s Company*, in which she played a sulfurous American at constant war with her Brrritish butler, portrayed by Donald Sinden. “If something is honest-to-God funny,” she says, “it’s funny to everyone. Everybody seems to think that British humor is very broad and rather blue, but that is going out of style because the common man is being educated more and the British are sick to death of it. I feel that we’re all kind of merging today; we’re all closer together than we’ve ever been before.”

Others, though, are careful to note that the imports have not yet made it past PBS and commercial syndication to the real promised land—network prime time. Why? They insist that the two nations’ popular tastes and network practices are too dissimilar. “The audiences are conditioned to totally different styles of comedy,” says John Robins of Canary Productions, who directed *The Benny Hill Show* for five years, worked with Dave Allen, Marty Feldman and *Monty Python*, and now works in Los Angeles. “In England the audience expects and is happy to receive much more slapstick, wackiness and wildness than here. They have been nurtured on music hall and vaudeville and burlesque. American audiences are much more conservative on the whole. So this business of saying there’s been an enormous

Both countries' comics  
use a wealth of ethnic jokes. But British  
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breakthrough is not as true as we are being led to believe. I don't think any of the networks would ever take a chance and put these British shows in prime time. They're too scared."

Robins has hit on a somewhat sore point. The comedy imports are not just quality curios; they are a yardstick by which one can measure the state of American TV comedy. While that comparison compliments the American flair for comedy dialogue, it points up that there may be less comic freedom of expression on American TV than shows like NBC's *Saturday Night Live* and ABC's *Fridays* make us believe.

Why is British comedy more liberated? According to John Robins, the artist and his director have total control of the show in England. This isn't the case here, where multitudes of executives may strap themselves onto a talent like uninvited shoulder holsters while comedians such as Richard Pryor, Chevy Chase, Steve Martin and Robert Klein try to divine the proper combination of self-respect and sellout.

If a good American comedian can overcome this bad acid, he isn't left with many choices. He's got to take a pass on the big-bucks sitcoms, got to say no to playing, say, an outer-space creature living in Boulder, Colo. (Robin Williams), or a no-speak-a-da-Englis grease jockey in a taxi garage (Andy Kaufman), or a crazed Lothario who has to pose as a homosexual (John Ritter). What are the alternatives? Not many. There are some urgent battles American comedians could be waging, but TV networks don't seem to be giving them support.

With fine-tuned gag-writing and a sharp eye for parody, it's no wonder that British shows have found agreeable audiences over here. Besides, they have that sauciness so pleasantly exotic to the American palate. American networks probably would scream in horror if one of our own TV comics reached for a gag line the way Benny Hill does, by reaching up a girl's skirt.

Sometimes, the British comics are the ones screaming. A few years ago, ABC proudly announced it had bought six *Monty Python* episodes to broadcast, only to have the Pythons sue because they felt their shows had been cut to ribbons and compromised by the network.

Hill says he has had American TV offers, the latest for a shot on NBC's *The Big Show*, where ex-Monty Python Graham Chapman appeared several times. But Hill has been reluctant—and wisely so—to relocate to America. Since 1969, when he moved from the BBC to Thames, Benny has done just four one-hour shows a year. In Britain, TV comedians are given the time and creative leeway to write and develop their shows. Hill, for example, is afforded several weeks of location filming, three weeks of rehearsal time and five days of studio taping—a good deal more than most American comedy shows would get.

*"An Arabian sheik with 500 wives was sued for divorce today by his 500 wives, who came home and found him with 500 other women."*

*"In New York today, thieves broke into the Metropolitan Museum and stole thousands of dollars in paintings. Police arrived and immediately sealed off all the exits. The thieves then escaped by all the entrances."*

— Both from *The Two Ronnies*.

Certainly, for all the laughs *Benny Hill* gets, British comedy is different from American. It utilizes different premises, ones that are frequently more situational or slapstick than verbal in their lunge at the gut. This is because British humor is set against societal and theatrical conventions different from those in America. "What's funny in England is usually what somebody *does* to somebody else," explains Robins, "rather than

what they say to somebody."

Both countries' comics use a wealth of ethnic jokes. But British comedy relies far more heavily on religious conventions that are not fit fodder over here. That is one reason why Dave Allen, who admits to relishing prelate pranks, has some trouble on American TV with religious material.

Also, the English class system is well-known by everybody there but has no real equivalent over here. Cleese's show, *Fawlty Towers*, was critically acclaimed, but it probably relied too heavily on class jokes to win over American audiences.

The traditions of English theater have spawned different sensibilities as well. Benny Hill roughly exemplifies the great English music-hall and touring-revue comedians, such as Robb Wilton and Max Miller. That vaudeville tradition lasted longer there than it did here, so that Hill can use as a recognizable and much-appreciated comic staple on his show a ribald poem or song that bites "near to the knuckle," as the British say. For instance:

"My mom said, 'Dad, it's time you told him all about the birds and bees.'

My dad said, 'The birds and bees,'

As he sat me on his knee;

He says, 'Now remember Uncle Joe,

And that picnic a while ago,

When he went off into the woods with Auntie Pat,

And how I chased old Riley's

daughter,

And what happened when I caught her?

I said, 'Yeah.'

He said, 'Well, birds and bees does that.'"

A more intellectualized strain of British comedy, one that has found sympathetic audiences here, dates back to the same year that Benny Hill's show began appearing on the BBC. In early 1952 four English comedians—Spike Milligan, Peter Sellers, Michael Bentine and Harry Secombe—began the leg-

The British have the freedom to create  
the crucible situations, but lack their American peers'  
flashes of brilliant comic dialogue

endary "Goon Show" on BBC radio. The show ran for eight years and was, according to one BBC executive, "the birth of modern English humor." Its effect might be compared to the far-reaching ripples of American comedy created by Sid Caesar's old *Your Show of Shows*. The Goons mocked subjects so sunk in the staid British bedrock that they were previously thought to be unrisible. And the Goons sent their targets aloft with great wit and clever parody.

As Peter Sellers proudly stated in a recent Rolling Stone interview, "We changed the whole face of humor in Great Britain and most other places as well." Comedians like Peter Cook and Dudley Moore of "Beyond the Fringe" fame, as well as Marty Feldman and Monty Python, carried this drier version of craziness to America. Cook and Moore and some of the Pythons have appeared on *Saturday Night Live* and worked in wonderfully as hosts of the show, hinting at the similarity in satiric styles.

Another affinity is the breeding ground for comedians in the two countries—comedy clubs. Here, young comedians sharpen their talons in places like The Comedy Store or the Improvisation. In England, there are numerous small social clubs in the northern counties of Yorkshire and Lancashire where young comics break into the business.

In 1971, Granada Television, one of England's top commercial producers, broadcast a show entitled *The Comedians*, a rapid-fire presentation of these young club comics on the rise. The show was top-20-rated through 1974 when it went off production. *The Comedians* was recently revived in England, and last October, Granada enlisted the help of Canary Productions' Bob Hagel in Los Angeles to develop an American pilot for a similar series.

Hagel's experiences provide an interesting case in point concerning the differences in TV procedures. "We ad-

justed the format for America so that it was a series of quick cuts from comedian to comedian, à la *Laugh-In*," Hagel says. "We had each comedian do 15 minutes of stand-up and then we edited it down so that the longest joke was 40 seconds. Then we linked together a series of one-liners based on similar material.

"There was no star, no host. A voice-over introduced the people," Hagel says. "We were trying to avoid creating a star show. One of the ideas was to build an improv company, and a certain number of people would rotate every week. We wanted to capitalize on unknown comedians."

Apparently, the adjustment wasn't enough. ABC balked. They wanted a host. Right now, Granada is deciding how to proceed next, and whether simply to recycle its old English segments for American TV after editing out local references. But that's a problem because, according to officials, the accents are so strong that they are undecipherable. "We had a very successful format in England without any linkman," says Vivian Wallace, U.S. manager of Granada. "But American programs are usually linked by a theme, or there's a format, or just one host, so that you can turn on the TV and know you'll be seeing somebody you want. *The Comedians* doesn't have that, so one week you might see your favorite and the next week not, and ABC is afraid we might lose our audience."

Losing audiences is less of a problem in England because with only three channels—BBC 1 and 2 and ITV—there are only two alternatives to whatever you're watching. So viewers may stay longer with a show. In America, land of opportunity, there are usually more dial choices. You and your unknown comedian may quickly be dialed out.

*"A joke that feeds on ignorance starves its audience.... Most comics*

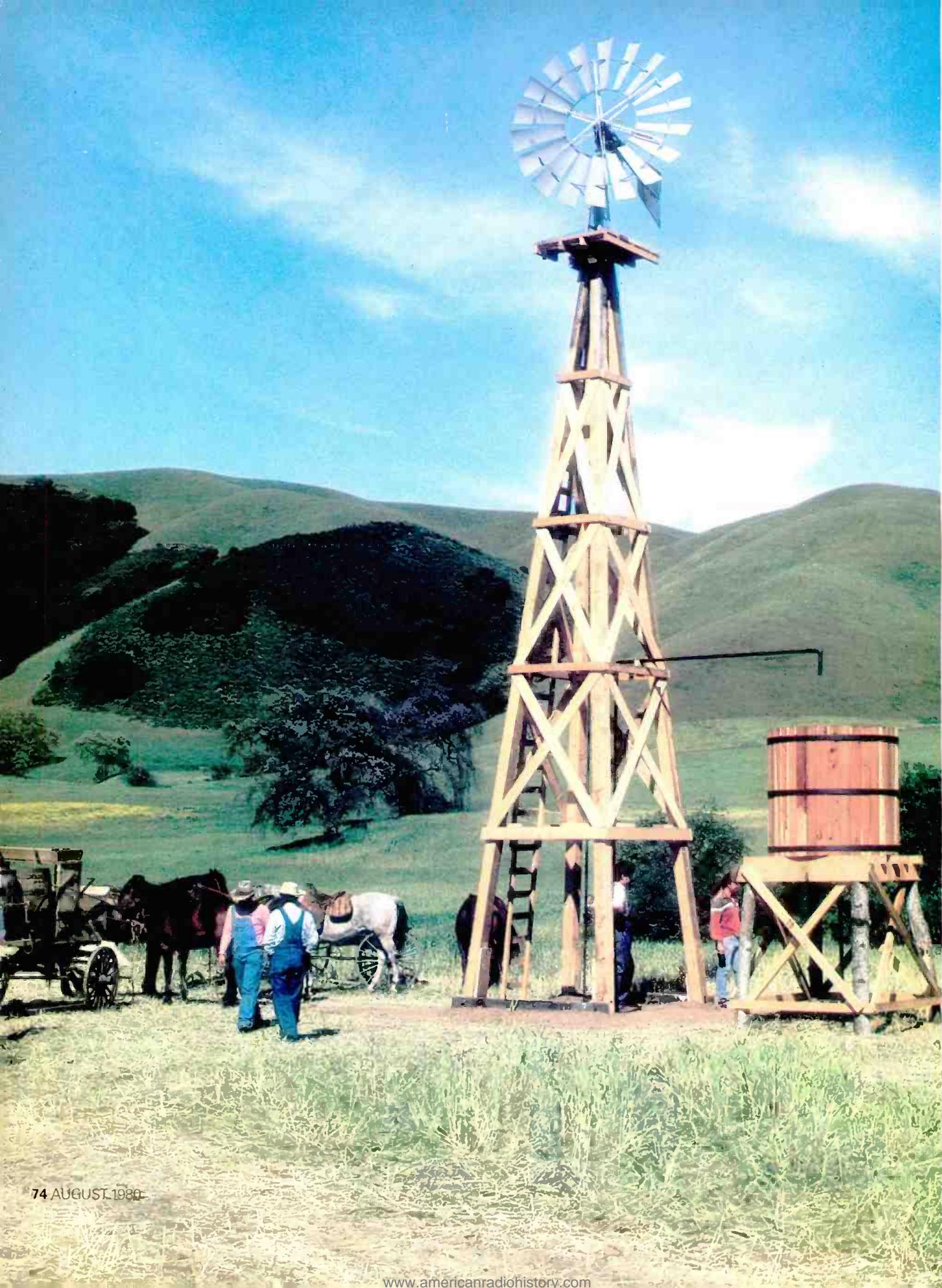
*feed prejudice and blinkered vision, but the best ones... illuminate them, make them clearer to see, easier to deal with. We've got to make people laugh till they cry. Till they find their pain and their beauty. Comedy is medicine. Not coloured sweeties to rot their teeth with."*

— The teacher, Eddie Waters, in Trevor Griffiths' 1975 play, "Comedians."

Both the British and the American television comedians fail to meet the responsibility Eddie Waters describes. The British seem to have the freedom to create the crucible situations—witness the number of hit American sitcoms (*All in the Family*, *Sanford and Son*, *Three's Company*) that were based on British shows—but they lack their American peers' ability to dissect the human neurosis in flashes of brilliant comic dialogue. If only we could meld the best of both comedy worlds.

This is not to say that we shouldn't savor these "coloured sweeties" from England. But we should realize that they have stepped into a curious vacuum in the American medium. Americans, it seems, may still have a yen for comedy-variety shows with skit material. They still want to hear what a comic mind has to say. Maybe there was something in the work of Milton Berle, Jack Benny (whose shows are late-night revivals in England), Fred Allen, Red Skelton, Carol Burnett, et al. that American audiences miss. Consider the fact that Americans are tuning in and laughing at British shows that are as much as 10 years old—some merely stitched-together versions of products no longer on the air in England—and a rather gloomy joke begins forming in your mind: Is Tim Conway our last, best hope?

Maybe he is. But only because American television is not allowing comedians to express themselves enough. And maybe that is what that British gent decked out in drag is really trying to tell us, after all. ■



74 AUGUST 1980

# The American Classic TV Wouldn't Touch

Until now, "East of Eden" couldn't make it to network television, despite such sure-fire themes as murder, prostitution, alcoholism and insanity

By STEWART WEINER

I think there is only one book to a man," John Steinbeck wrote in 1951 and, as far as he was concerned, the only book that ever churned and bubbled inside him was "East of Eden."

Forget "The Red Pony"; forget "Of Mice and Men," "Cannery Row," "Tortilla Flat" and even the Pulitzer Prize-

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winning "The Grapes of Wrath"—to Steinbeck each was written as "an exercise, as practice for the one to come. And this is the one to come. There is nothing beyond this book."

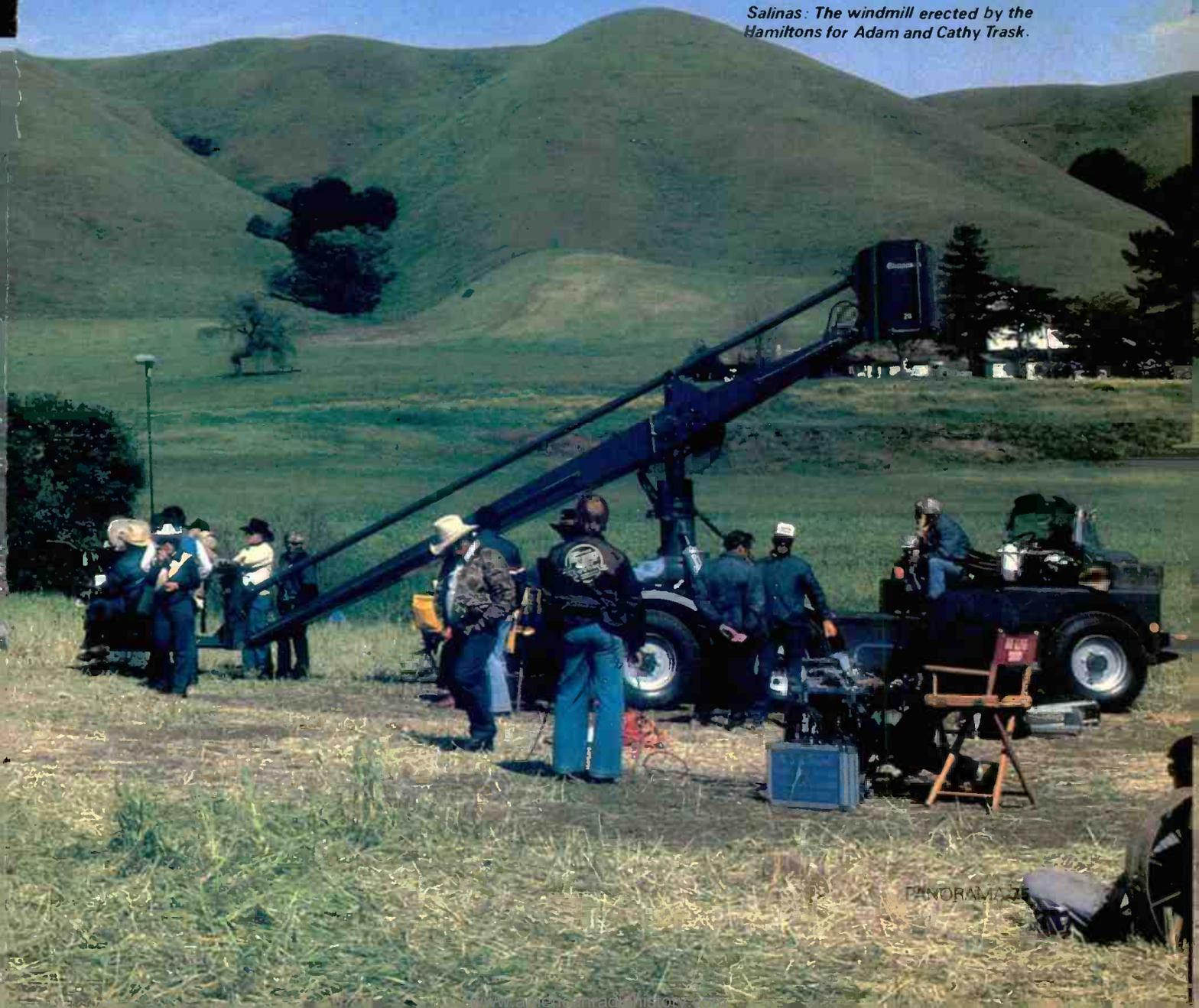
He invested three years just screwing up the courage to begin writing. He false-started it twice and went through four working titles, but, eventually, after spending almost a full year in hand-writing creation, finished the thing on Nov. 1, 1951. (We know all this because Steinbeck kept a running journal along-

side the manuscript, published after his death, that recorded every detail of the task for posterity.)

The initial critical reaction to "East of Eden" was quite frosty: The Atlantic called its "intellectual naiveté...exasperating," and the New York Herald-Tribune patted the author on the head patronizingly: "The most unfriendly critic could hardly fail to grant that 'East of Eden' is the best book Mr. Steinbeck could write at this moment."

As it turned out, however, America's

*Salinas: The windmill erected by the Hamiltons for Adam and Cathy Trask.*



PANORAMA ZEP

bookstores were full of friendly critics. "East of Eden," at 602 pages for \$4.50, became an instant smash, a standard fiction text used in many American high schools, and probably the major piece of evidence used by the 1962 Nobel Prize Committee to support its verdict that Steinbeck's writings were "distinguished by a sympathetic humor and a social perception." The book, in a word, became a classic.

Basically, "East of Eden" tells the story of two families, the Hamiltons from Salinas, Cal., and the Trasks from Connecticut (who move to Salinas). Their converging paths are followed from the Civil War to World War I. The Hamiltons seem normal enough—except for a suicide or two and an off-the-wall grandfather. But there's something a little, uh, antisocial about the Trasks.

For instance, Adam Trask's wife, Cathy (who later changes her name to Kate), murders her parents in a deliberate fire, becomes a prostitute and a bad drunk, finally gets beaten up by her pimp so badly that she crawls, literally, into Adam's life, marries him but sleeps with his half-brother Charles on the wedding night, shoots Adam, abandons the twin sons of questionable parentage and is downright unpleasant through all of it. And, while she's a bit off, what can you make of Adam, who takes his sweet time discovering all of this about his own wife?

At any rate, the story has everything. It is an authentic family history—the Hamiltons of Salinas really *are* Steinbeck's mother's family, disguised so little that Steinbeck didn't even bother to change the names: "I can tell all I want about them now because they are all dead and they won't resent the truth about themselves." And "East of Eden" is also part Bible Studies—allegorically and with the subtlety of Reverend Ike, Steinbeck weaves into the proceedings one of the oldest stories in the Book—Genesis, Chapter 4, Verses 1-16—casting the Trasks in the roles of Adam and Eve and their two sons as Cain and Abel.

On and on the book goes for 265,000 words, twice as long as "The Grapes of Wrath," even with the 90,000 words the author had to cut, and it's all told in Steinbeck's chummy, nurturing, page-turning style, ultimately covering three generations of prostitution, fratricide, alcoholism, insanity, murder, robbery, unspeakable sexual circuses, jiltings, aimless drifting, sibling rivalries, you name it—most of it set against the incredibly lush scenery of the Salinas Val-

ley in the county of Monterey, California.

You might think that such a story—so packed with incident and so upliftingly sleazy—would make a great miniseries for television. But it wasn't exactly pounced on by the networks. NBC turned it down twice before producer Barney Rosenzweig finally succeeded in selling the idea to ABC. However, ABC's commitment is a hefty one. We'll see, this fall, a seven-hour, multimillion-dollar epic that, unlike Elia Kazan's 1955 movie, will tell the entire story of "East of Eden." (Kazan covered the last third of the book only.)

And the talent that's been assembled to create the miniseries is impressive. The script is by writer Richard Shapiro, who did the definitive wife-abuse TV-movie, "Intimate Strangers," in 1977. The cinematography is by Frank Stanley ("10"). The art director, Ray Storey, is a man whose name rarely appears in TV credits because he's *extremely* picky about the projects he'll work on. And the director is Harvey Hart, who recently distinguished himself with the TV-movie "Like Normal People."

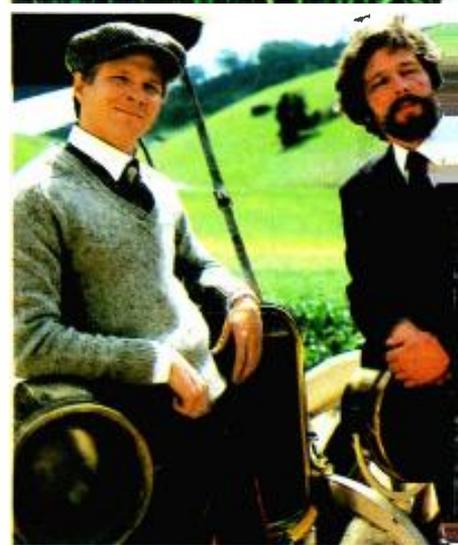
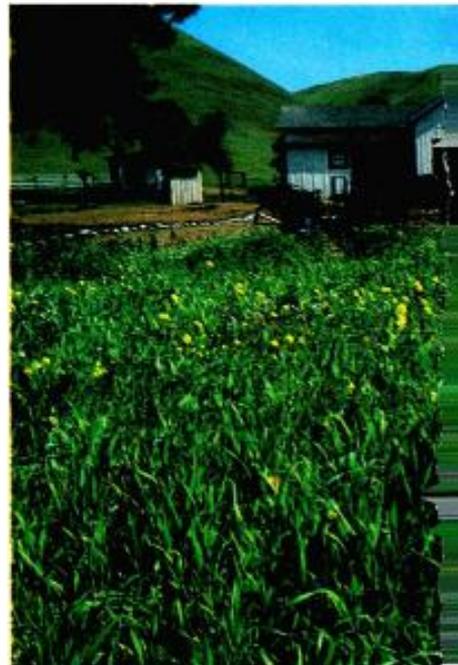
Though nobody has seen all seven hours of the film assembled, edited and scored with music—two of the seven hours were filmed in Georgia, four in Salinas and one in Los Angeles—one thing is certain: the entire crew is trying for a faithful, credible and considered adaptation.

"Surely I feel humble in the face of this work."—John Steinbeck, journal entry, Feb. 12, 1951.

Steinbeck's not the only one to be overawed by "East of Eden." At a remote ranch, a half-hour's drive from Salinas on Highway 101, where BNB Productions is on location filming *John Steinbeck's East of Eden* (the network's official title, arrived at after much research), I discover people falling all over themselves falling all over Steinbeck.

Scattered everywhere, for example, are actually read copies of the novel. Everyone on the crew is *actually* reading it. Not just stars and nervous writers from the media, but key grips, electricians, landscapers and wranglers—rough-and-tumble types with thick down vests and six-pack bellies. Steinbeck fever is rampant.

How could they help it? The Cha Ranch, which is being used to represent the Trasks' place, circa 1900, is at the bottom of a green and gold valley, and it's just as magnificent in vivo as it is in Steinbeck's lucid, artful descrip-



Top: Adam Trask (Timothy Bottoms) with his bride Cathy (Jane Seymour) in front of their new home in Salinas. Below, left: Cal Trask and his father Adam, played by the Bottoms brothers, Sam (left) and Timothy. Right: Mr. and Mrs. Edwards (Howard Duff and Laura Whyte) with their two sons (David Hamilton and John Kelly).

tions. Giant shapes of clouds shadowed on enormous green mountains. Deep-blue skies. Proportions so huge they dwarf the moviemakers' equipment.

Not everyone, of course, is copping to the affliction. Star Timothy Bottoms, who will play the main character Adam, and who volunteered to play the role before anybody thought to ask, tries to pretend he's not caught up in the mania—"Oh," he says casually, "I read



the book once, back in junior high school"—but a quick look into his dressing van reveals that he's reading not only the book, but the journal, too, and even the pictorial "Steinbeck Country."

Costar Jane Seymour is another fan of the author's, but more up front about it. She says that when she finished reading the book one night at 2 A.M. she "had to talk to somebody about it, so I called my parents in London. 'Daddy,' I said, 'I've just read the most fabulous book about an amazing woman. I really identify with her.' They went out and bought a copy the next day and were probably horrified."

Everyone around here has a Steinbeck reminiscence. ABC executive Carol Rubin says she wrote Steinbeck a love letter when she was 11 years old.

On-line producer Ken Wales retells the story of how he found the *actual* Hamilton ranch outside of Salinas and how he filmed one of the blacksmith shots at Sam Hamilton's *actual* forge. Lloyd Bridges, who will play Samuel Hamilton, becomes reverential as he recalls the experience of seeing and holding Steinbeck's grandfather's original tools. And art director Ray Storey remembers reading "To a God Unknown" (one of the author's early near misses) and being so impressed that he packed up his wife and came to Steinbeck country for an immediate visit.

**T**hese people care about Steinbeck. And, hell, they'd have to, because, despite the Biblical references of *East of Eden*, this project is no Sunday-school picnic.

In fact, it's more like an exercise in penitence, as a glance at a typical call sheet shows (a call sheet is the sheet of paper, distributed to all members of the production team, that describes what will be needed the following day).

Tomorrow, on Day 40 of the shooting, the call sheet schedules seven scenes to be completed at the ranch. They will be set up, lit, rehearsed, shot, reshot, reshot, reshot, reshot, reshot, reshot and probably reshot again and finally printed. (No exaggeration. Scene 125, in which Timothy Bottoms has to cross the ranch-house bedroom floor to cover the window, a scene that takes half a page in the script, will be shot by director Harvey Hart 11 times.)

Tomorrow morning, five cast and day players will be due on the ranch, which is a half-hour from home base—the Quality Inn Town House in Salinas—no later than 8 A.M. Jane Seymour, who goes into makeup first, will have to leave at 5:30 A.M. Makeup artist Tom Miller will be at his post at 5:12 A.M.

If all seven scenes are completed by nightfall, the director will push ahead with another three before he sends everyone home. And this is the 40th day of such a schedule. Ahead lie 38 more.

Why are these people working so hard? Mostly because of Telly Savalas.

Telly Savalas? Telly isn't in this production and he has nothing to do with *East of Eden*, but it's still his fault.

Telly was in an ABC miniseries last year called *The French Atlantic Affair*, which badly flopped. Overnight network thinking became: *The French Atlantic Affair* was a flop, ergo, all miniseries are flops. ABC, before finally giving the go-ahead for casting *East of Eden*, hemmed and hawed interminably.

And while the network was dither-

ing, inflation was eating alive the BNB budget. Prices, interest rates, artists' tickets all soared. And then there were the Winnebagos. Executive producer Mace Neufeld—of the feature films "The Omen," "Omen II" and, soon, "Omen III"—estimates that the vans that dot the location shooting, used as a bargaining chip by the actors because they had to be signed so late, are costing \$1500 a week.

No one will say exactly what the entire production is costing, but estimates run from \$10 million to \$13 million. And more.

*"Now I must go to the Salinas Valley. And if it can be believed, I'm glad to go there on paper rather than in person."*—John Steinbeck, journal entry, Feb. 15, 1951.

"After a while your body just gets used to only five hours of sleep every night," says affable on-line producer Ken Wales, who is part psychologist, part patriarch, part filmmaker and part actor (he will be the minister in Sam Hamilton's funeral scene) during these tough location days.

**W**e're at dinner at the East of Eden restaurant in downtown Salinas, and it's obvious that Wales is still not entirely used to the pace, seeing as how he is almost asleep in his Steak Teriyaki.

The East of Eden restaurant is indicative of what's happening in Salinas. It used to be an old church until it got converted. Now it serves drinks and plays the Doobie Brothers on the jukebox, all of which has some of the townspeople in a huff of objection. Drinking in an old church is bad enough. Exploiting the name of Steinbeck is almost blasphemous.

It's a little late, however, for objections to the Steinbeck frenzy that passes for commerce in Monterey County. The natives here have a record of overexploiting their resources. All of the canneries that dot the wharf in Monterey and are now chic restaurants and gift shops went out of business because local fishermen grabbed every last sardine from the ocean. And they're about to overdo it again, this time with Steinbeck, who, you are told continuously (if erroneously), is the only American author to win both the Pulitzer and Nobel Prizes.

There is a John Steinbeck room in one of the luxury hotels in downtown Monterey. The John Steinbeck House in Salinas, the author's huge boyhood home, has been turned into a restaurant so widely promoted it has to be

booked days in advance. The visitors' bureau invites you to hold your next meeting here in Steinbeck Country. And you'd have to be deaf, dumb and blind not to know, after even a brief visit here, that John Steinbeck was the president of his senior class, played basketball, was a voracious reader, cared for his mother, loved all the people, worked among them and championed their cause.

When Steinbeck looked back at his childhood here, he remembered how "gray" it all was, but no matter. He made these people and their land famous, and they're just returning the favor. Besides, take heart: there is not yet an East of Eden Roller Disco.

*"Research indicated that the actual star was the story itself."*—Mace Neufeld, executive producer.

British actress Jane Seymour seems embarrassed as Timothy Bottoms hands her the yellow envelope. As the two of us enter her dressing van, she opens it to discover a small gift. Rolling her eyes heavenward she sighs. "I'm afraid that performance was for your benefit. Actually Timothy hasn't spoken three words since we got here." She sits erect, alert and scarred. Yes, scarred—today's shooting takes place in the part of the story after Cathy/Kate gets beaten up by her pimp. The scar looks so real you think at first she is covering up a *real* one with makeup.

**T**hough Seymour is hardly known now—most people mistake her for Jane Alexander—by this fall her face will have been all over the place. She'll have two theatrical films out—"Oh Heavenly Dog," in which she plays opposite both Chevy Chase and Benji; and "Somewhere in Time" with Christopher Reeve. And then there is the part of Cathy/Kate, the one she's doing here in the middle of nowhere—"my meatiest role so far, without a doubt."

Certainly the role is the most difficult.

In the book, Steinbeck described Cathy/Kate as a "monster...Kate's horror is her lack of human reaction. You never know what she wants." Which may be great literature, but it's a heck of a vague road map for an actress to follow. Seymour, however, sees it as a challenge. "I realize Steinbeck didn't give much motivation here," she says, "but he did drop some clues about her liking 'Alice in Wonderland' a great deal, so I've used that. Besides, you know, if Cathy were around today, people would probably think she was smart."

**H**ad she ever seen the 1955 film that won Jo Van Fleet an Oscar for the role Seymour is playing? "I was afraid to, but eventually I did. What a relief! I realized that this part had never been done at all, actually."

*"My god this can be a good book if only I can write it as I hear it in my mind."*—John Steinbeck, journal entry, March 28, 1951.

About a year ago, writer Richard Shapiro was asked to try a rewrite of the teleplay for *John Steinbeck's East of Eden*. "You can't understand or fully appreciate how I felt about doing it," he says now. "When I was growing up, the only thing I wanted to *be* was John Steinbeck." Shapiro was asked to do a rewrite because the original teleplay by the late James Poe approached the material too somberly for the producer's taste. "Steinbeck," Shapiro continues, "had a marvelous sense of humor, don't forget, especially in this book."

At 405 pages, this is the longest script Shapiro has ever written. He begins the action not in Salinas, as the book con-

fusingly did, but in Connecticut with Adam Trask in a horse-drawn cart with his parents. The script starts with Adam at 6 months old, and ends with him close to death after a stroke. No, this isn't going to be anything like the movie. "If you've ever seen the movie, you realize how thin it actually was," Shapiro says.

**W**here else did Shapiro's version depart from the actual text? "Practically nowhere. I was very faithful to the book. There is one scene I reworked, however: the wedding night with Cathy and Adam and Adam's brother Charles [played by Bruce Boxleitner]. As you remember, Cathy drugs Adam and then crawls into bed with Charles, but I couldn't figure out from the book why she'd do that. Then I thought it out. Both Cathy and Charles were vying at that moment for Adam's soul. Cathy didn't want Adam for evil purposes, remember—she just wanted some goodness to fall back on, and Adam was nothing if not 'good.' So she knew she'd have to disarm Charles, who was seeing right through her.

"That's when I took a liberty here with Steinbeck. Steinbeck had Charles learn about the marriage *before* Cathy got into bed with him. Real cruelty. In my script, however, Charles does not know at the time that Cathy and Adam are already man and wife. I took that one liberty, yes. And I think Steinbeck would applaud."



How is the script going to show all the sexual depravity in the book—the prostitution, the whorehouses, the “sexual circuses”? Says Shapiro from his office at 20th Century-Fox, where he is working on a new series for television called *Oil*: “We had some problems with Standards [the network’s Standards and Practices department] on that. I tried to get the pony in there, and the girl with the cigarette. We end up suggesting that it’s some kind of show where ladies take off their clothes. I hope it’s shot decorously. Standards said to me at one point, ‘If this had been anybody else but Steinbeck, we’d be screaming’.”

“I don’t even tell Kazan any more that ‘East of Eden’ is still paying off. He’d kill himself trying to kick himself in the behind for selling his share.” — John Steinbeck, letter, June 22, 1966.

**B**arney Rosenzweig just got the good news from ABC—the network is going to give him and the company another month to finish the production. The due date is now Sept. 1, 1980. “We know it’s going to be a great show,” he says confidently. But...his TV-bred paranoia starts to cloud the picture.

“There’s only one thing that still keeps me up nights. What happens if CBS decides to put on something like ‘Kramer vs. Kramer’ opposite *East of Eden* on our first night?” ■



Above: Cathy’s parents are incinerated in their New England home—an act of murder and destruction executed by Cathy herself. Right: Sam Hamilton (Lloyd Bridges) attends Cathy as she gives birth to her twin sons. Below: Adam Trask rides out with the Army to fight against the Indians.



# Thank You, No; I'd Rather Read a Book

The video revolution claims  
a casualty

By JOHN LEONARD

*Before John Leonard assumed his current duties as a critic of the arts and culture for The New York Times, he labored as a television critic for that newspaper and for the old Life magazine, where he used the pseudonym "Cyclops." Now freed of the obligation to criticize individual television programs daily or weekly, he still occasionally casts a cold eye on the medium. In his weekly "Private Lives" column in The Times he has been highly critical of the new technological developments that are changing television. We asked him to explain why he has adopted this attitude.*

One could have read all about it in Sports Illustrated in 1973:

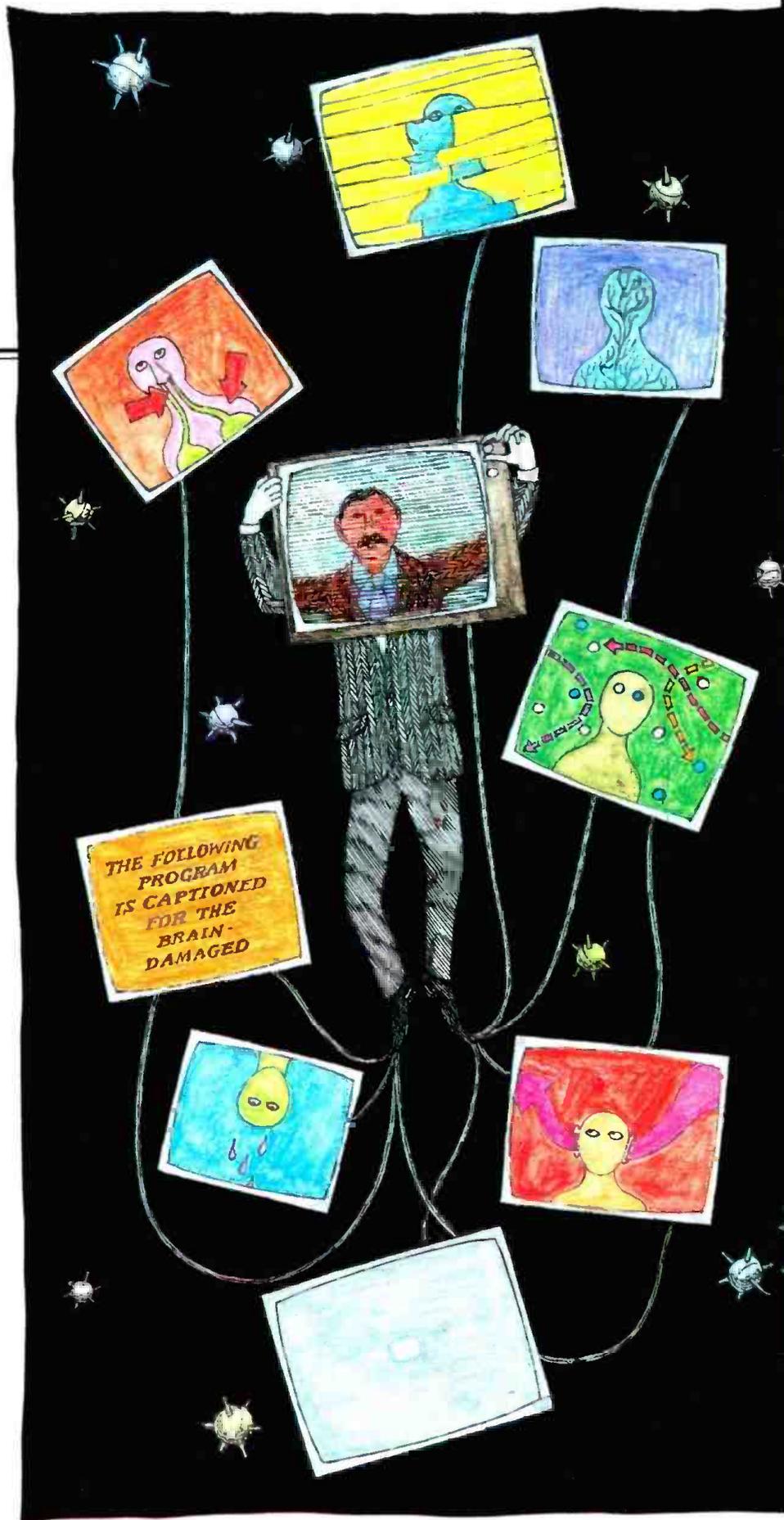
"Angered over the outcome of a baseball game between the San Francisco Giants and the Houston Astros, Gerald Bishop, sports-minded resident of Redding, Cal., a mobile-home community, picked up his .30 caliber rifle and fired 17 shots into or about his television set. One stray bullet penetrated the wall of a neighbor's home as a 70-year-old lady sat knitting in the living room, thereby startling her into dropping a stitch. . . .

"Bishop was still seething when put into a police car, where he complained it was too hot and petulantly kicked out the back window.

"Didn't you ever want to shoot your TV?" he demanded in a reasonable way.

"There was no television set in the cell to which he was assigned."

It is a lapidary anecdote. Didn't you ever want to shoot your TV? Once, at midnight, watching the Carson show, lapsed into a dedicated agnosticism about reality itself, waiting to meet the



next guest—a Las Vegas comedian at the acme of his profession—I was stung to indignation by a mosquito-like cluster of 14 commercial messages during a single station break. I emptied a gun at NBC. It was one of those guns that shoots quarters; they are made especially for suburban commuters who need to blast their way through toll-booths in exact-change lanes on expressways. There were quarters all over the rug. The dog ate them and gave birth to Cleveland's fiscal crisis.

**T**he anecdote is lapidary, too, in that Gerald Bishop lived in a mobile home. It is my feeling that all Americans, in a manner of speaking, live in mobile homes. We are a nation of nomads, a people on the run. We carry our homes on our backs, like turtles. The television screen is our windshield. Television, in its 30 years of concentrated programming, its news, its commercials, is how we communicate with each other, wherever we happen to have stopped, without getting out of the car. It is the aspic in which we are jelled, the only community we have.

There are those, like Herbert Schiller in "Mass Communications and American Empire" and Daniel J. Boorstin in "The Americans: The Democratic Experience" and Raymond Williams in "Television: Technology and Cultural Form," who attach a sinister significance to this relationship between what Williams calls "mobile privatization" and communications systems. I tend to agree. More and more I feel like a Luddite, one of those English textile workers who sought early in the 19th century to destroy the new machines in the factories. The Luddites feared unemployment; I fear deracination—the loss of my environment. Am I live, or on tape?

Downstairs, the children are tethered to the television set. If they aren't watching dirty movies on cable, they are playing electronic soccer. Overhead, a star fleet of communications

satellites weaves a seamless web of misinformation and canned laughter. Consciousness III, effort zero—as Charles Reich didn't quite put it in his "The Greening of America." For Christmas, the children want a videocassette recorder in order to preserve for their convenience insults to the human intelligence that they might have missed while sleeping off a hard day of long division and Roman history, or while going to the refrigerator or the bathroom. I will buy them books instead. There is no reason to believe that the new technology will bless us with anything more than the old trash, available now on demand, just as the credit card merely multiplied our opportunities for disappointment. On cable, the dog watches hockey home games and variety programs dubbed in Spanish.

**W**e don't leave home any more, and nobody sits on our stoop except the drunks and the coke freaks burning a third hole in their noses. We don't even call home "home." Home is now a "living center," where we are serviced. The "living center," as it evolves, doesn't differ much from E.M. Forster's bad dream in a 1911 short story called "The Machine Stops." That is, it will be a combination of cocoon and communications module, somewhere in the armpit of one of Buckminster Fuller's tetrahedral cities.

This cocoon will be managed by a computer. The technology already exists to put such a computer into every cave, with a keyboard to do the programming, a microprocessor to do the work and a monitoring screen to see what's going on. The computer will take care of everything from air-conditioning and dish-washing and accounting to the microwave oven and the videodisc recorder and the home-security patrol, whether or not we are around in our sweaty particularity.

When we are around, we can play with our picture phone or our voice-ac-

tivated typewriter, our wraparound 3-D TV screen or our neon sculpture, our biofeedback console or our holography box. We will be plugged into the library and an electronic archive; we will be able to punch up a printout or dial a quiz show. We might even hook ourselves up, like the inventor Remo Saraceni, to a "stethoscoped stereo system" and listen to the boom of our own brains or watch our blood pump. Or, if we are bored with ourselves, we might stick a multigame cartridge into the brain of our television set and checkmate or doodle.

If, on the other hand, we are ambitious, we might do some serious "drawing" on the cathode-ray tube, something like Charles Csuri's "Hum-

*continued on page 91*



Soon to star in "Anne Frank," Melissa Gilbert is...

## Like Any Other Typical 16-Year-Old with Her Own Publicist, Secretary, Business Manager, Attorney, Chauffeur and Tutor

By CAROLYN SEE

**A**n afternoon at 20th Century-Fox on the ferociously closed set of "The Diary of Anne Frank," being readied for a fall air date on NBC. The hushed crew and dearth of visitors reflect the austerity of the set, and the story itself. These families of forgotten Jews have been locked up in this attic for a long time; everyone feels edgy, malnourished, hopeless. (In fact, the entire cast of this production—minus the star—eats at a separate table in the commissary, fed on strict portions of the Scarsdale Diet so that they can more convincingly convey malnutrition.) The cast is full of familiar faces—including Maximilian Schell, who plays Mr. Frank, looking bleak and stern. A veil of sad solemnity hangs over all.

The only bright spot is Anne herself—Melissa Gilbert—her light brown hair dyed a more somber shade, dressed up for her first "date" with a young man. They meet in the staircase outside the attic. In their conversation, shy and stumbling, Anne confides that she knows she's "not a great beauty and never will be," then asks the naively leading question, "Peter, did you ever kiss a girl?" But the clock strikes 9, and Anne Frank must go "home," two steps down into the main part of the attic.

Maybe it's the enforced darkness, the spooky, realistic set, that makes a crew member mumble, "Imagine getting all dressed up to go out, and you're only going across the room..." He shrugs and sadly sighs.

But before the crew has a chance to really get choked up, the scene is wrapped up in a speedy two or three takes. And while Melissa and young Scott Jacoby, who plays Peter, quietly giggle and joke, the main attic is set up

for a more complex scene, one that actually precedes the staircase conversation by moments in the finished film: Anne's mother, Peter's mother, share a table; a middle-aged man strolls through; Peter comes down off the steps; Anne crosses the set to go out on her "date." Five people, all with something to do, in perhaps a 40-second scene. But Peter comes down the steps too soon, the middle-aged man looks befuddled, and Peter's mother has hell's own time with her interpretation. "Do you think I ought to say it *this* way?" she asks Emmy-winning director Boris Sagal, "or do you think I ought to say it *that* way?" Mr. Sagal is patient but increasingly less so.

Through all this Melissa Gilbert maintains a certain level of serene soundness, of *integrity*. When she chats and giggles, between run-throughs, she does so in the lowest possible tone. When it is time for her to open the door and cross through the set, she does it perfectly every time. When the garrulous actress holds up the action, Melissa goes into something like a yoga trance. She is not impatient; she's not even patient. She simply dwells in suspended animation until the time comes for her to open the door, cross the set, and, again, go out on her date.

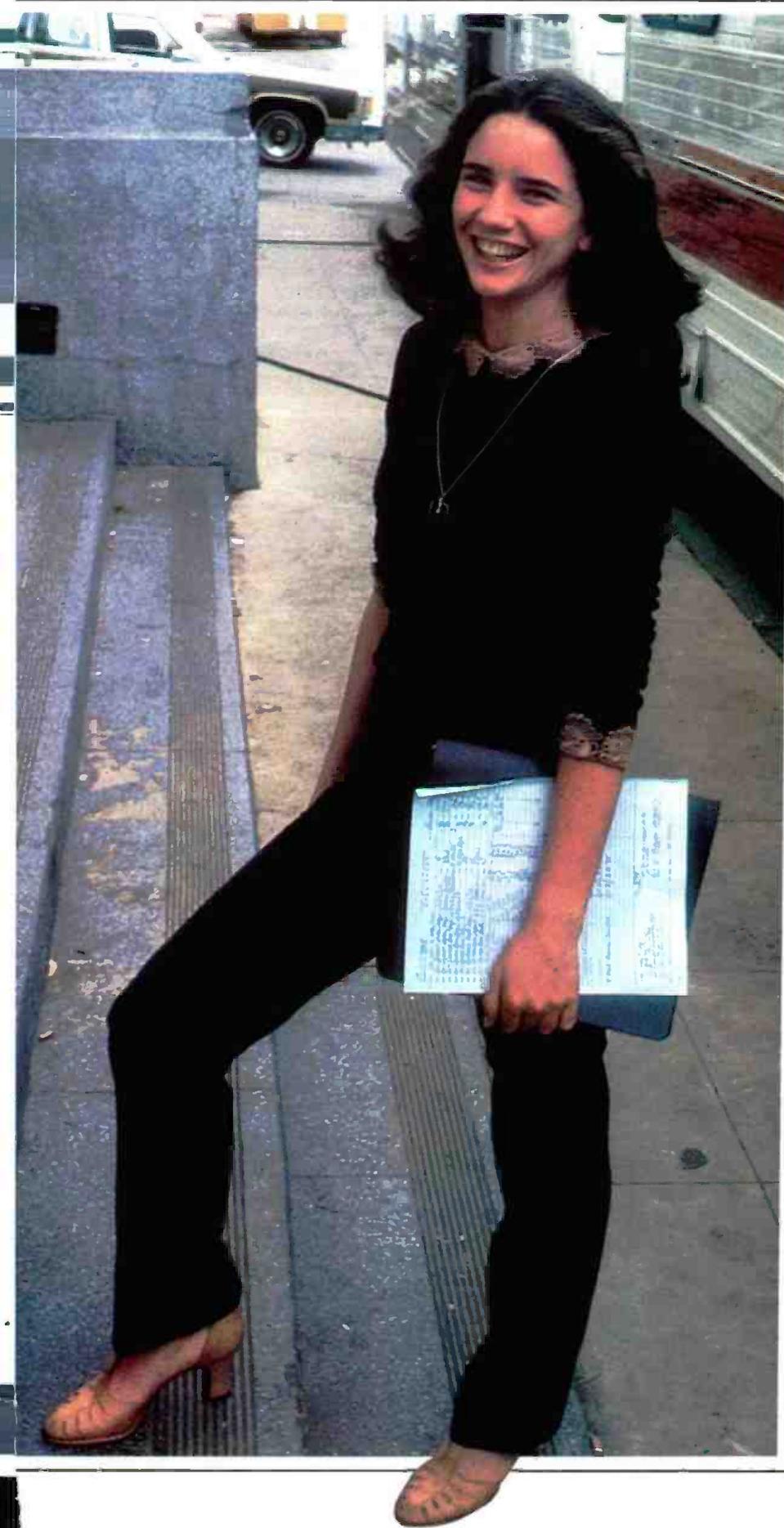
**Y**ou begin to see, the entire question of acting ability or charisma aside, why Melissa Gilbert—tough little Laura from *Little House on the Prairie*, Helen Keller in the television production of "The Miracle Worker," erstwhile purveyor of Crest toothpaste, Alpo dog food, McDonald's hamburgers and Carter's baby clothes—has become something of a minor treasure in TV's

talent bank and an NBC mogul in her own right. She is professional; and she is nice.

A famous movie producer once opined that, "In order to succeed in this business you need four things. You have to have persistence, stamina, you have to be fun to play with, and you ought to have talent. Those four things, exactly in that order." But perhaps, where people work together for unconscionably long hours under alternating stress and boredom, the third item is the most important.

**O**K. Melissa Gilbert, in the commissary at 20th, "giving an interview," with her mother, Barbara; her PR. man, Mickey Freeman; and a journalist, me. Although the ratio is three grown-ups to one, it is Melissa Gilbert's table, and many a smiling sycophant drops by to pay his respects. Before Melissa shows up, Mr. Freeman, a kindly, protective person, says..."Melissa's attention span, well, she is 15..."

That's the wonder of it. This goofy 15-year-old comes up, gives her mother a big hug, her PR. man (who looks very pleased) a big hug, and me the slightly out-of-focus stare of American girlhood. "What's for lunch?" she asks. "I'll have fish, no potatoes. I'm trying to lose weight. I'm not fat, I know it, but I'm *chunky!* Here!" she says, pinching her upper arms, "And *here!* And *here!* Oh!" she says, as the plate slides in front of her. "Squash. Wonderful!" She takes a second look at the doubtful orange slabs next to her filet of sole. "That *is* squash? I have to get back to my dancing," she says. "I don't have time for dancing right now." She waves at another table, her face decked out in



*Sweet 16 and already a mogul: Melissa Gilbert in multi during the shooting of "Anne Frank," her second starring role (after Helen Keller) in a movie made by her own production company; Saint Joan could be the third. Says her manager, "We're not out for bucks... we're looking for quality projects."*

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*A first glimpse of refuge: Melissa, as Anne, at the foot of the stairs to the attic that will be her home for the next two years—her last before being taken to the concentration camp where she died.*

smiles. "That's the whole cast. They eat at the same table, 'cause they're on that *diet!* They're watching me now." She puts her head back and bumps into a philodendron. "Hello," she says to it. And with no transition, she talks about school. "It's in the Valley," she says, "I'm not supposed to say where it is." (But she gives me the first initial.) She discovers that my daughter, her own age, is at a sister school. "Oh, does she know Karen S.? Does she know Bill H.? No! Yes! He's cute, isn't he? I've never seen him, but they say he's cute. Actually, I've seen his picture, I *don't* think...."

**F**or those who haven't checked out 15-year-old girls recently, I should explain they come in two varieties: the large, sullen kind who dye their hair pink, don't make their beds and sass their mothers, and the other kind, just as wiggly — but really neat.

The talk turns to Melissa's upcoming Sweet 16 party, a luncheon at the Beverly Hills Hotel; Melissa's pleased about it but she's really interested in being able to drive. "I've got to take more *driving* lessons," she says. "Got to *drive* better! Do you want to know what kind of car I'm getting? A Chrysler LeBaron station wagon with a tailgate!" When I ask why that particular

car (in a town where the Audi Fox or the BMW is the car-of-choice for 16-year-old ladies), Melissa looks at her mother. "Can I say why?" Her mother nods and Melissa giggles. "Because we know Mr. Barish of Barish Chrysler Plymouth!"

**S**omething about this combination of words strikes her as unbearably funny. But because she is well-behaved, she tells me that she is doing very well in school, that algebra, geometry, and now trigonometry are her best subjects, that she is now allowed to date ("Except nobody has asked me out yet. I guess that's because of ...who I am"), that if her career is not going too great by the time she finishes high school, she wants to go on to be an obstetrician—"because math is my best subject and I'm a good student"—and if her career *is* going great (or maybe if it's not; I may have lost the thread of this flow of words) "I'm going to UCLA, graduate, go on and get my M.B.A. so I can *get rich quick!*"

Then she goes back to her squash.

When I ask her about the differences between playing Laura, Helen Keller and Anne, I get the kind of answer normally reserved for parents imprudent enough to ask, "How was school today?" Melissa gives a short impersonation of a water buffalo. She fondles the philodendron leaf behind her head, looks at the ceiling as if she's lost something up there, assumes the strange monotone of an idiot savant and drones, "Playing Laura is like *family!* Helen Keller—you *lost* control. Anne Frank—you *have* control."

Then she snaps back. "This is a very uncertain business. That's why I might be an obstetrician." She smiles, dithers on a bit, notices that the cast is leaving and dances out, but not before she gives us a fast ten minutes on a report she's doing for school, on the German-American Bund.

Her mother, Barbara Abeles, and her PR. man sigh. *The energy*, is their silent comment. Where do they get the energy?

Then, after a moment, Melissa's mother, a nice woman who looks a lot like Marlo Thomas and, in fact, was a high-school friend of Marlo Thomas, begins to talk about her daughter. "It started when she was about 2. All my friends kept telling me I should take her in to do a commercial because she was so cute. But, you know, I just never got around to it. The first time I did, she got

I didn't know at the time how unusual it was. ••

the part. For Carter's baby clothes. We didn't do it for a while. Then, I don't know, we went back to it. It was...well, every commercial we went in for, she got. I didn't know at the time how unusual it was."

"When she was 9, there was a chance for *Little House*. I had doubts about her doing a series, but she wanted to do it. A lot of little girls read for the part, but the minute she walked in the door, Michael Landon took one look at her and said, 'That's Laura.'" She looks at Mickey Freeman for confirmation. "Isn't that what he said?"

I ask what might happen if this solid career evaporates, if—like Dennis the Menace or that kid on *Lassie*, I think—the child star finds herself to be an unemployed adult actor? Mrs. Abeles laughs and shrugs. "What can I tell you? She said it herself; Melissa wants to be an *obstetrician*."

(There is, perhaps, a slightly darker side to this easy-seeming story of success. Another Hollywood mother, whose children went to nursery school with Melissa, says, "Barbara's wonderful, a character, one of a kind. She's gone through a lot of suffering. Melissa's career started out of financial necessity, as I remember. Mr. Gilbert died, and there was also a divorce in there some place. Barbara went through some hard times. But she was wonderful with those kids! And Melissa is a delight. She was then, and she is now." And then this woman, no stranger to divorce or Hollywood unemployment lines, and a conscientious attendee at private school PTAs, says, "God, I'd do anything to have a nice little kid like that.")

The wonder of it is that this "good kid" has already become not just a star, but a mogul with her own production company, a center of power and money, a source of jobs for scores of people.

Perhaps in keeping with Melissa's projected image of "good taste," the question of money in all this is kept a very careful secret. An ordinarily nice member of the Gilbert entourage reacts with a violent—if fascinating—combination of Victorian horror and modern rudeness when I ask what Melissa earns. "They'll never tell you anything about money," he says. "You must never ask them anything about money." And then he hangs up on me.

It takes an independent producer,

who also works at NBC, to fill in the gaps. "For a long-running series like *Little House*," he says, "Melissa probably earns anywhere from \$10,000 to \$30,000 per show. Remember, she isn't the star, but she is integral to the story. Those initial figures don't include residuals or syndication. And once she forms her own production company the figures go up. For 'Miracle Worker,' she probably got \$50,000 for starring, and walked away with another \$200,000 as co-producer. The same for 'Anne Frank.' She's way up in the six-figure range. Again, in each case, maybe another \$100,000 coming in later for repeats, residuals, maybe foreign sales. Also, as titular head of a production company, she'd theoretically be the woman in charge of an entire studio staff—crew, actors, administrators, secretaries, wardrobe, perhaps a hundred people on her payroll, for as long as it takes to put the production together."

Not that all this came along as a matter of course. It was only after Melissa had put in several years as Laura, that her mother—remarried now, to attorney Harold Abeles, and in the process of putting together another whole family life—decided it was time for a change in Melissa's management.

"My husband had been telling me that," she says, laughing. "But you know how it is. You don't always listen to your husband." So Melissa's mother found Ray Katz, of Katz-Gallin-Morey Enterprises, a personal-management firm.

Katz-Gallin-Morey was looking specifically for *young* stars, whom it could "bring up" to become major American entertainment figures. When Melissa's family met Mr. Katz, it was (according to all of them) yet another version of love at first sight. "Ray showed us that we were paying way too much in taxes," Mrs. Abeles says. "He showed us how we could have our own company, Half-Pint Productions. He took our ideas to the networks. He fought for them. We all thought of Melissa doing 'Miracle Worker,' but it was Ray who thought of getting Patty Duke Astin for the part of Annie. First, she didn't want to do it, but then she did. And first the network didn't want to do it, then they did. The same way with Anne Frank, first they said no...."

What turned them around? *continued*

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●● She’s not like other kids her age. Everything she



As Helen Keller, with costar Patty Duke Astin, who herself played Helen on stage and screen.

“Oh...Ray.” Then in a nice Hollywood non sequitur, “He’s been almost like a father to her.”

Katz returns the compliments. “Before, all Melissa did was *Little House*. I give Michael Landon all the credit! He took Melissa; he was so patient with her; he laid a great foundation. It helped that *he* was the star of that show, so she didn’t have the responsibility. Now, she’s older, he gives her more responsibility. But she’s not like other kids in her age group. Everything she does is in good taste. We’re not out for the bucks at this point. We’re looking for quality projects. Like ‘The Miracle Worker.’ Like ‘Anne Frank.’ We’re looking for her to become one of the most distinguished actresses of her generation.”

I mention to Katz that Melissa is lucky to have found him. The manager who has been talking in gorilla tones, softens right up. “She is a Young Girl that *is* a young girl! She doesn’t throw her weight around! She’s had a wonderful upbringing! Her mother has done a wonderful job with her. Melissa accepts direction. That’s the key to the whole thing. The thing about Melissa is—she is the only one in the world who’s allowed to call me uncle.”

**K**eeping the Young Girl the young girl—keeping business in harmony with the rest of life—may be what it’s all about. On another occasion, I speak to Harold Abeles, compulsive reader, hard-working attorney, father of two children, stepfather to Me-

lissa and Jonathan, husband to Barbara. He sounds what by this time is a familiar refrain—Melissa is a great kid—but with variations. “Everything in life is free,” he says happily, “but, dear God, the price is high! We try to give Melissa a normal life, as normal as it can be, under the circumstances. She has to clean her room, take care of her baby sister. Of course, she’s an A student. We want her career to be different from other girls her age. We screened ‘Song of Bernadette’ the other night to see if it would be right for her—but it was a one-note story. We *are* thinking of ‘Joan of Lorraine.’ We want her to have taste! Responsibility! Self-respect! Confidence!...”

**A**s if in oblique answer to an unasked question, Abeles goes off on another tack. “Melissa’s the most generous person in the world. She was very upset when I bought her mother a Rolls-Royce, because she’d wanted to do it herself....”

And, “People aren’t aware of the logistics of a person like Melissa—all the people it takes to keep this thing going. Melissa has to have a business manager, a regular secretary. She has a fan-mail service. We have a chauffeur for her who also acts as a sitter on the set because a grown-up has to be with her all the time, and Barbara’s home taking care of the other kids. Melissa has a publicist. And a teacher—because she can’t go to school while she’s working on *Little House*. She has an attorney—I guess that’s me. And then her personal

does is in good taste.”

manager, Ray Katz. He's been terrific. He handled the deficit financing for 'Miracle Worker'...."

And finally, to make his and his family's position perfectly clear, Abeles sums up. "Some people might think I make money off Melissa. It may be the other way around. Last year, before she did 'The Miracle Worker' for television, Mr. Katz arranged for her to do a two-week run of it on stage, down in Florida. She was wonderful, of course. Now he says he'd let her do anything on-stage; he'd take her to Broadway! But I had to fly the entire family all the way down to Florida, all the kids, and a governess for the other kids, and the two mothers-in-law!" He laughs, "How could I be making money off that?"

**M**aybe he's not. Still—I can't help thinking as I stand on the set of "Anne Frank," watching the star at work—still, if the popular equation of money with success has any validity at all, someone, maybe a lot of someones, should be making a lot of money off Melissa Gilbert. Because this is an extraordinarily successful young girl. You can see why, as Melissa/Anne stands with Scott/Peter in the stairway to the attic, somber setting for their budding romance, and plays out her scenes (with the director saying over and over, "Fine, swell, print that, print the other one too"). In a medium where James Earl Jones goes through seven takes to walk into an office and say, "Hi there," these potentially difficult scenes are going at breakneck speed. Still, the cast has been here all morning, rehearsed through lunch and will be here hours more. During a break—a small one, not worth bringing in the stand-ins—Melissa and Scott stand patiently while the lights are adjusted, their faces powdered, hair fluffed out. A man with a light meter thrusts his gadget a fraction of an inch from Melissa's face; she keeps her eyes on her partner as he—barely moving—shows her a disco move. Taking direction, she imitates it perfectly. He laughs, she laughs, deep in their own good time.

On May 8th of this year, Melissa Gilbert turned 16. The occasion was marked by a luncheon in the Maisonette Room at the Beverly Hills Hotel. Chicken Jubilee was served, with rice pilaf and *haricots verts*. Dessert was meringue glacé and a lemon cake with lemon-custard filling. The cake was inscribed, "Happy Sweet 16, Melissa." The party was a great success. ■

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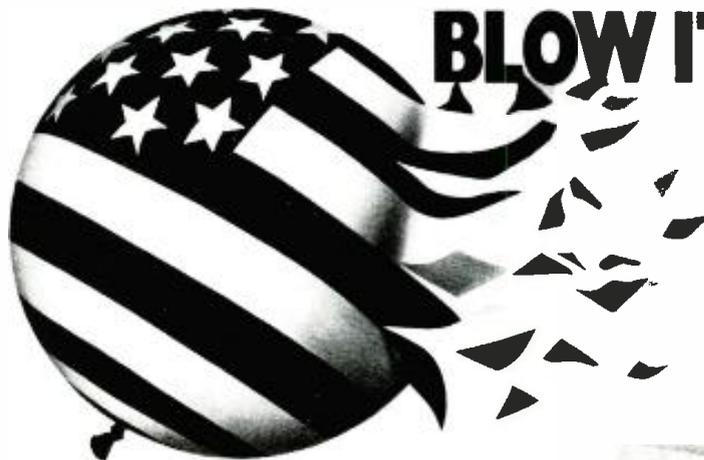
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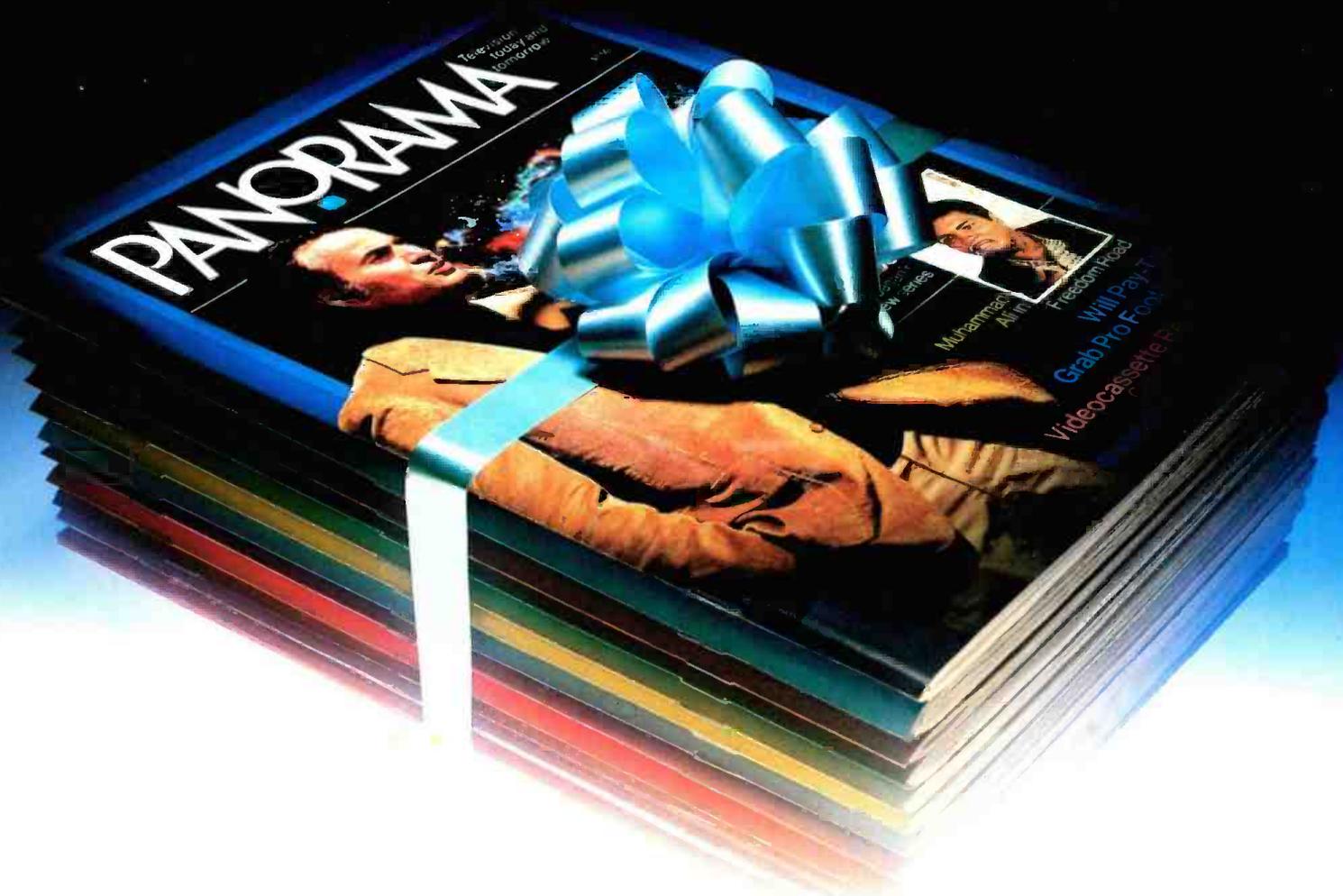


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# Morality Play on Wheels

By JOHN SCHULIAN

**T**he next-door neighbors said Roller Derby was a fake. I did not believe them for one second, but I held my tongue. The neighbors had the television set and I was just a kid taking advantage of their good nature. Still, my timidity chafed at my young heart.

Twenty-eight years later, armed with a TV of my own, I at last have summoned the courage to leap to the Derby's posthumous defense. I enter into testimony the recollections of a sweet little lady from Alameda, Cal., who divides her time between selling tickets for rock concerts and doting over four grandchildren. Her name is Bobbie Johnstone, although true believers in the audience may remember her better as the Blonde Bomber.

"I was the first Blonde Bomber," Bobbie Johnstone says. "They had somebody else they called the Golden Girl—Miss Joan Weston. That was all right. But when I left the Roller Derby, they started calling Mary Gardner the Blonde Bomber, too. I was kind of indignant. I didn't think anybody should be called the same thing as me."

Bobbie Johnstone's indignation was both righteous and rightful. One look at her nose—"It's Roman on the top and there's nothing on the bottom," she explains—and anyone could tell that she suffered for her art. "I stopped counting after I broke my nose the twelfth time," she says. It is much easier to tote up how many times she broke her back in 15½ seasons. "Oh, that?" Bobbie Johnstone comments. "That just happened once."

Roller Derby a fake?

Surely the cynics jest.

Oh, Roller Derby may have taken occasional liberties with the truth, but that hardly diminished its positive contributions to the Nation's culture. For one thing, it stands with basketball as

one of two truly American games, and basketball has never had two teams of at least five skaters each blasting around a banked Masonite track, beating the Bo Diddley out of one another. Beyond that, the Derby was a morality play, a lesson in justice triumphing over evil—provided the villains didn't forget their places. And Roller Derby was one of the first bastions of the feminist movement: women divided time evenly with men in every production, and nobody, but nobody, carved a larger legend than that irrepressible plumber's daughter, Toughie Brasuhn.

One other thing: The Derby inspired Hollywood to some of its finest moments. You must remember Mickey Rooney as "The Fireball" and Raquel Welch as the "Kansas City Bomber." My personal favorite, however, is "Unholy Roller," starring Claudia Jennings, the late queen of B movies, as a disenchanted tuna canner who sought happiness in the Derby.

Obviously it was a populist sport. It had all the elements that go with beer cans, undershirts and hair curlers. There was speed, violence, sublime happiness, outrageous pathos and the unspoken suggestion that—with a push in the right direction—it could have been you out there racking up points for the San Francisco Bay Bombers. Why, the banked track was overflowing with ex-ballplayers, ex-mind readers and ex-short-order cooks, and the rumor was that the first shoes Peggy Smalley, a wildwood flower from Tennessee, ever wore were roller skates.

**T**he creator of this blue-collar phenomenon was Leo Seltzer, a promoter of the style and decibel level that can't be found these days. Snake-oil salesman's instincts and a guilt-edged intellect told him what the public would buy.

After learning his way around in

walkathons, Seltzer reached his creative zenith 40-odd years ago with Roller Derby. The first one drew 20,000 people to the Chicago Coliseum but was tame to the point of boredom. The good stuff came when the slow skaters decided their only hope was to block the fast ones. By the time Roller Derby made it to television, fisticuffs were in full swing. No wonder Toughie Brasuhn gave Milton Berle and the wrestling matches a run for the ratings.

Toughie could skate a little and act a lot, which made her perfect for a game where the rules changed nightly but the plot was always good guys versus bad guys. In case you've forgotten, she was one of the bad guys. She was so bad, in fact, that legend has it an enraged fan once threw a squalling baby at her. I like to think the only nice thing Toughie ever did was catch it.

And only godless Commies would have turned down the chance to boo Ann Calvello, the peroxidized hussy who drank Scotch from a silver chalice, wore out men half her age and always dumped sweet Joan Weston over the railing.

**S**o what went wrong? One night in 1973 the Bombers were waging war against yet another band of philistines; the next night they were gone. At first I thought Roller Derby had simply moved to a different time, a different station. What actually happened was that it was elbowed out by the Roller Games, a camp copy of the Derby whose Blonde Bomber goes by the frivolous moniker Darleen Langlois de la Chappelle. Later, however, there was talk that Leo Seltzer laid the Roller Derby to rest because he wanted to die thinking he had created a sport, not a freak show. My old next-door neighbors must have chortled heartlessly when they heard that.

I refuse to bow to them and their ilk, though, for I have seen what has taken the Derby's place. They are known as trash sports, and any day now they will feature Helen Hayes shooting pool with Minnesota Fats and Cyrus Vance wrist-wrestling some potbellied barfly from Billings, Mont. Such foolishness is not what we disenchanted tuna canners want. No, sir. Just give us someone who will catch the baby. ■

## LETTERS



### ESPN Should Think Small

Regarding your piece on the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network ("Cable's Answer to a Sports Fan's Prayer," June), I hope that the people who run that network will keep providing an outlet for the so-called minor college sports in the future when they are regularly presenting big-league and big-bucks attractions. Think, for instance, of the college baseball fan who craves the chance to see future Tom Seavers and Fred Lynns in action. By offering and developing this home-grown programming, ESPN may serendipitously stumble onto the discovery that America's fans care about more than the collegiate football and basketball superpowers.

*Kevin Burkhardt  
New York City*

### Ready When You Are, Mobil

Mobil is right: "Not all summertime viewers are at the beach or on the patio" ("Fueling Up for Summer," Panoramic View, June). Nor are they all out boozing Saturday nights, so *weekend* viewing can stand much improvement also, right? Let's hope Mobil's proposed summer programming measures up—and hope, too, that a company with such resources will go on to improve Saturday-night offerings throughout the year. American viewers are ready for more quality drama if producers will give them a chance at it and not quit early when high ratings don't follow immediately.

Your magazine should help, too, if anything can; it's high quality, if the June issue is representative, and just what we need. Don't let up and don't quit early. Improving television programming will take time.

*John Lawrence  
California State College  
of Pennsylvania  
California, Pa.*

### Life Imitates Art

In Howard Rodman's fond remembrance of David Janssen ("So Long, Harry Orwell," May), he mentions but does not name a 1962 *Naked City* script that he wrote. The episode was entitled "On the Battlefield Every Minute Is Important," and it is a rather prophetic reflection on the life...and death...of David Janssen.

In the story, Janssen played the part of a successful advertising executive who was dying a premature death. Knowing he had only a short time to live, the executive tried to find someone to succeed himself. However, there was no one in his agency that he could feel safe in entrusting his business to. Impressed with the dogged determination that Detective Adam Flint (Paul Burke) devoted to a routine case, Janssen offered to leave his agency to him. Flint finally refused though, choosing to remain a cop, and the executive was left with no one to take his place.

Eighteen years later, the part finally caught up with the actor, and David Janssen found himself on that same battlefield. And when your time is so short, as Janssen's was, every minute is truly important. Ironically, in life, as in the part he played, there was no one to take his place either.

*Andy Jaysnovitch  
Parlin, N.J.*

### Avant-garde Video

Over the years, the general public has seen television as a stage, a movie house, a tour guide, a town crier, and a place to sell ketchup. All of those facets have managed to weave themselves into a business: the TV industry. What about the facet that doesn't fit into the scheme of things in the business end—avant-garde video?

C'mon, fellas, I know it exists. Your June issue gave us an idea of what Todd Rundgren's work looks like ("Planet Wars"), the first I've seen, although I know he's been experimenting for a couple of years with the medium.

What else has been done with video that the general public doesn't know about? Your magazine would be an excellent place for an article on underground, experimental or avant-garde video. This type of thing would be of great interest to the video enthusiast

searching for more worthwhile entertainment. It would also give confidence to the video artists who are waiting patiently for their time to come. How about it?

*Peter Thompson  
Terre Haute, Ind.*

### Asimov vs. Tolkien

I read with great interest Isaac Asimov's article ("The One Ring Is What We Make It," May). I have been a devoted admirer of J.R.R. Tolkien's work for many years. Although the article was typical Asimov in its excellence, it was with a certain degree of skepticism that I awaited the ABC show "The Return of the King" on May 11.

Unfortunately, I was correct in being skeptical. The animated program was a cheap, tawdry attempt to popularize Tolkien with the television-viewing masses that utterly failed to do justice to the third book in the epic work. It has converted what could possibly be a fascinating screen adaptation (as it was in Ralph Bakshi's theatrical opus) into Saturday-morning sugarcoated pap. The film as broadcast is rife with inaccuracies, and those extremely banal songs were in my opinion totally unnecessary. ("Where there's a whip, there's a way"—really!!!)

Television can be a wonderful medium, but this case is only another sad example of its taking a great literary work and perverting it for its own purposes.

*George L. Moneo  
Hiawah, Fla.*

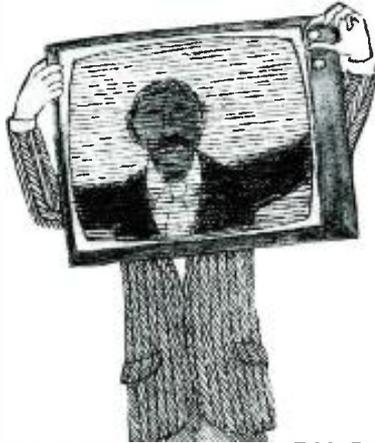
Although I have been a great admirer and reader of Dr. Asimov's writing, I must take issue with one point in his article. His analogy is certainly tantalizing, but I cannot agree that the Ring could be used wisely; Tolkien made a strong point of its power of corruption. If the Ring does represent the lure of technology, the future looks gloomy, to say the least.

*Thaddeus Z. Maruszak  
Chicago*

### Readers' Roundup

Know what kills me? The fact that the modern media hardly think twice about granting graphic and gruesome coverage to events of death and murder, but write off their nemeses (life and procre-

*continued on page 99*



mingbird" with 14,000 modulations on one form, or John Whitney's "Matrix" of lines and cubes choreographed by mathematical formulas, or Siah Armajani's remarkable "To Perceive 10,000 Different Squares in 6 Minutes, 55 Seconds," or the endlessly swooping line of the "Black Star" of Leonard Kilian and Campion Kulczynski. And if not computer art, why not computer music? Sit down and fragment a vibration by fiddling with real time and pure acoustics. To paraphrase T.S. Eliot: in the semiconductor and the loading program, there one is free.

But we are tired. It's real time to take off our disposable clothes and go to waterbed, where, while we sleep, we will learn Chinese—by what Aldous Huxley in "Brave New World" called hypnopaedia—or program a sex dream.

I have mentioned sex. You will have wondered whatever happened to one of our more popular leisure-time activities. Long ago, of course, it lost its procreative function. The reservoirs of the future are as full of contraceptives as they are of fluorides. Sex, then, for pleasure? It is no longer necessary. Stimulation of the "pleasure center" of the brain via scalp electrodes—exactly the same method by which experimental psychologists traumatize laboratory rats—allows for ecstasy and privacy at the same time, swoon and spasm, spurt and *schmerz*, at designated intervals of variable durations. We will program the computer for an orgasmic zap, just as we program it to start the coffee perking in the morning, and no one will ever know except the memory bank.

To whom, then, do we "communicate," at breakfast or any other hour of the day or night? To our friends and associates, by picture phone. Now, E.M. Forster objected that picture phones were indistinct, and left out emotional

nuances. E.M. Forster was innocent of the industrial color-video projector, a spewer of images more distinct than most of us can tolerate; he was equally innocent of electromyography, by which an oscilloscope visualizes moods, even when our friends aren't talking. We don't, after all, have to *smell* them, although that, too, can be arranged.

Our parents, after all, will have been sentenced to the funny farm, where the modern world will wait for them to die so that it can reclaim the calcium in their bones and teeth for recycling; or they will be locked in machines of their own choosing, stimulating the pleasure centers of their feeble brains with scalp electrodes, thinking about figs. And our children, if they ever get out of the sperm bank, will be off at the bottling factory, the artificial womb.

We will be alone, watching reruns on the VCR. We will be, as Arthur C. Clarke pointed out, nothing more than disposable containers for DNA.

What if, inside our living centers, we experience a sudden attack of the discrepancies? Our play fatigues, and the rhapsodic attenuates, and last night we dreamed of a microprocessor doing unspeakable things to a hologram while the picture phone was watching. Discrepancies lead to metaphysics, which is messy. *Why am I?* Where are danger, luck, touch, fear, mystery, sin, accountability, wonder? Whatever happened to love, birth, pain, death and blood, to earth and water and wind and rock and fire, to the *grain* of life?

With these dimensions missing, we don't even constitute an empty space—something to be filled up with expensive toys; we are merely points on a spectrum, numbers on a dial, frequencies that fade in and out. Switch channels, switch selves.

Didn't you ever want to shoot your VCR? ■

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sage. "Instead of answering your questions, they keep bringing their answers back around to the single point they want to make. Then they wonder why they come across looking manipulative." Other reporters cite what they feel are subtle forms of intimidation. Roger Peterson remembers how, when he first came on the energy beat, his phone calls didn't get returned—or "they returned them three days after my deadline had passed."

Arco's Anthony Hatch puts it bluntly. "Oil companies did not know how to communicate when the embargo hit, and they still have trouble. The oil companies have low credibility. Justifiably. And it's questionable if they're ever going to catch up."

At least some companies are taking specific steps to catch up in the credibility game. Shell, for example, runs a television school for its managers to help them conquer their fear of the medium. And Gulf has hired an outside consultant to get its execs on TV.

All this does not mean oil has become an industry of breast-beaters. Robert Goralski says, "Gulf is protesting errors more. We were easy pickings in the past because... we were afraid of hitting the networks over the head, but we're not now." The company's most celebrated protest is probably the one that involved a segment of the NBC *Weekend* show, on which Gulf was charged with squeezing its own franchise gas-station dealers out of business. James Gannon, who produced the *Weekend* report, wrote about Gulf's response in an article for *The Nation* entitled "A Visit from the Gulf Truth Squad." Now a producer for NBC's *Prime Time*, Gannon says that several weeks after the original segment appeared, top brass from the Gulf public-relations staff met with NBC News officials to protest the story. Yet, Gannon says, when he had asked Gulf to provide a spokesman while he was filming the story, the company consented only to answer questions in writing.

At the meeting Gulf showed a "rebuttal" film, which, according to Gannon, was filled with distortions, half-truths and facts taken out of context. Gannon thinks Gulf reacted to the story so strongly because the *Weekend* segment had been credited with spurring passage of state laws "which the oil companies didn't like."

According to the producer, "Gulf did not go to all this trouble to correct one small error. It made a political document [the rebuttal film] to head off an onslaught of state legislation.... Then it

tried intimidation at NBC—behind closed doors, cut off from the light of public scrutiny."

And what does Gulf have to say about all this? That its tough response was an effective means for combating what it views as an unfair story. When I asked Goralski why Gulf did not provide a spokesman for the original *Weekend* segment, he said, "We knew ahead they were out to crucify us. No one person could have answered the questions they asked. Some would have required a lawyer's response, others a marketing manager's. But they only wanted one guy on camera. We said we couldn't do that."

Other oil companies have sought at least moral vindication by taking their complaints to the National News Council. The NNC operates out of New York and acts like a journalistic court, hearing complaints and rendering decisions on the fairness of contested news reports. While it has no power to enforce sanctions or compel retractions, the Council's evenhandedness has won respect. Some of its members come from the media, but several have business or academic backgrounds.

In its two most recent decisions on TV and the oil industry, the Council has come down hard on TV. Both involved segments of a five-part energy series that ran on the *NBC Nightly News* in October 1979. In the first, Exxon objected to a segment entitled "Dirty Oil and Dirty Air," which (in the Council's words) "focused on an Exxon marketing decision that cut low-sulphur-fuel shipments to Exxon U.S.A.'s largest customer, Florida Light & Power, and how that decision affected the quality of the air in Florida." The other complaint was filed by Shell against a segment called "Fly Now, Freeze Later," which discussed Shell's decision to pull out of the New England heating-oil market while continuing to market profitable jet fuel.

The Council supported the oil companies. In the Exxon case, the NNC indicated that the segment unfairly left the impression that the oil company was guilty of duplicity. "Perhaps that suggestion was unintentional," the Council concluded, "but news broadcasters... are not relieved of the obligation to be reasonably fair just because time and space limitations make their task harder." Similarly, the Council found the segment on Shell to contain "unsupported" and "unfair" reporting.

Since its founding in 1973 the Council has handled two other such com-

plaints. In 1977 Standard Oil of California complained that an *ABC Evening News* report on oil-industry legislation was "one of the most flagrantly one-sided pieces of reporting in a long time." In 1974 Mobil charged that an ABC documentary was "vicious, inaccurate, irresponsible, biased and shoddily researched." In both cases, the News Council found the oil-company charges to be unwarranted.

One possible remedy Big Oil does not seem to have explored is withdrawing advertising from a show or network it thinks has slighted the industry. Even someone as relatively hard-line as Gulf's Goralski says, "I would find that approach abhorrent." (Mobil, however, apparently did not find it abhorrent to pressure PBS to "review" the network's commitment to show "Death of a Princess" last spring, in the wake of diplomatic protests from Saudi Arabia. Whether because of Mobil's substantial investments in public-TV programming, or because of more subtle prodding by the U.S. State Department, roughly 18 PBS affiliates dropped the show, which dealt with the complex cultural strains in Saudi Arabia that resulted—according to the filmmakers—in the execution of a member of the royal family and her lover.)

Given the acrimony and suspicion on both sides of this issue, it's easy to forget that oil and TV get along on a day-to-day basis a lot better than their rhetoric suggests. In the course of a year, TV airs hundreds, if not thousands, of stories about oil. And most of them don't provoke visits from the Gulf "Truth Squad" or battles before the National News Council.

Reporters say the oil folks are becoming more responsive as they learn to live in the limelight of publicity. And the oil industry is beginning to find that some reporters don't seem to be as stupid as they used to be.

Still, some things give you pause. I talked with a Justice Department lawyer who handles Government antitrust cases against the oil companies—the type of guy you would figure to have a lot of hot dope on the chicanery of Big Oil. What does he say? "Given the nature of my job, I'm hardly in love with these oil guys, but I can see why they're angry with the blatant incompetence, the blatant inaccuracies. TV coverage has been atrocious, inept and a great disservice to the country. Even the best energy reporters are superficial and uninformed."

It makes you wonder if we'll ever get the real oil story, doesn't it? ■

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

continued from page 6

waters: in at least two instances, Watson has lost prospective new reporters to Carl Bernstein, his successor at ABC, who has also been casting his nets abroad.

**Very vs. Ultra.** A suggestion that television be shifted exclusively to UHF channels has brought a firestorm of criticism to the Federal Communications Commission.

The proposal comes from Thomas Schuessler, a law professor at the University of Arizona, who is author of a 329-page FCC report on the practices of the three networks.

Schuessler says the shift of frequencies would be the "optimum solution" to the problem of network scarcity, because it would bring the more plentiful UHF stations out of the shadow of VHF. The change would, in his view, rectify one of the FCC's biggest mistakes: the decision made in 1952 to allow VHF and UHF stations to compete in the same markets. The agency seriously misjudged the growth potential of UHF, he says.

The networks aren't enchanted with Schuessler's proposal. CBS says any benefits that might come from implementing the plan are "highly speculative," while the costs of conversion would be a minimum of \$3.5 million to each of 600 VHF license-holders.

Criticism has also come from broadcasters. The Association of Maximum Service Telecasters, representing about 240 TV stations, comments: "Although the report, with its 589 footnotes, has all the gloss of a scholarly work...it is incorrect in important respects."

Some virulent letters on the subject have been received by the FCC. As one agency staffer puts it: "People respond most

violently if they perceive their oxen are being gored."

## LONDON

Richard Gilbert reporting

**Masochism & Sons.** Comedy and soap opera, those traditional escape hatches from unbearable reality, seem to be edging closer and closer to the pain threshold.

A recent BBC comedy series, *Time of My Life*, was so black in its humor that viewers were moved to write letters of protest. Its hero, Ken Archer, is fired by his firm after 33 years of loyal service, and on the same day his wife leaves him for a younger man. His two sons (one punk, one gay) care nothing for their father's plight, and Ken tries to commit suicide—but fails. In the course of the series, he is taken hostage, mugged, and incarcerated in an asylum while, throughout, his wife tries to strip him of all his possessions.

Is this funny? Author Jim Eldridge, who has never before written for TV, thinks so: "Ken Archer's life is so catastrophically awful that one can only laugh." Producer Dennis Main Wilson also defends the series against its critics: "Surely there is comedy material other than the perennial mothers-in-law, boobs and bums and upper-class twitery which have for so long been the conventional approach. The mores of the reassuringly comfortable past are being swept aside. As mores change, so does our comedy."

Meanwhile, on the commercial channel, a twice-weekly daytime soap opera, *For Maddie with Love*, is confronting viewers with the agonies of terminal disease. Nyree Dawn Porter (Irene in *The Forsyte Saga*) plays a woman afflicted with a brain

tumor, who wants her family to hasten her death.

The aim of producer Dennis Vance has been to deal with these highly charged issues with an "astringent lack of sentimentality." The brief given to author Douglas Watkinson by Associated Television, the London programming company, was simply: "Write something about a woman who knows she's going to die and decides to kill herself."

Next month comes the first of 26 further episodes of the series, which will show how Maddie's family comes to terms with her death.

**Blue by you.** Britain's best-selling videocassette is not, as you might imagine, "My Fair Lady" or "The Yeomen of the Guard," but a soft-porn offering called "Electric Blue"—this country's first video men's magazine, which appears in a new edition every quarter. The first edition sold 9000, the second 14,000. It costs around \$65, and is also available for rent and through exchange clubs.

David Grant, distributor of "Electric Blue," says that, until now, "most companies have just relied on transferring old films to video. But we have actually gone out and made a product for the new video market, and it shows a trend. It's a real alternative to other entertainment media."

He's right. Which other medium offers a "nude-housewives' special" that boasts "domestic action in front of the log fire and over the cooker"? Buyers of the cassette are invited to send in their own titillating home movies, and if their contributions find their way into the magazine, the producers/directors/stars can expect a cheque for \$550 in the mail.

"Electric Blue" has also included reviews of adult movies, a nude disco contest and scholarly (well, studious) features on Brigitte Bardot and Marilyn Chambers. ■



Brigitte Bardot: Puts voltage in "Electric Blue."



Faye Dunaway: "Bonnie and Clyde."



Al Pacino: "Dog Day Afternoon."

## VIDEOCASSETTES

### NEW RELEASES

#### MOVIES

**Alien** (1979)—Haunted-house drama in outer space, as a being of indeterminate size and appetite stalks the crew of a cargo vessel returning to earth. Sigourney Weaver, Tom Skerritt, Harry Dean Stanton. (Magnetic Video Corp.; \$54.95) (R)

**Bonnie and Clyde** (1967)—Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty star as the Depression-era outlaws in this much-acclaimed study of violence. With Gene Hackman, Estelle Parsons and Michael J. Pollard. (WCI Home Video; \$55)

**The Boys from Brazil** (1978)—Laurence Olivier versus Gregory Peck in Ira Levin's story of a Nazi-hunter after a mad doctor intent on creating a Fourth Reich. With James Mason, Lilli Palmer, Uta Hagen. (Magnetic Video Corp.; \$54.95) (R)

**Bullitt** (1968)—Tough police melodrama about a detective tracking syndicate killers, starring Steve McQueen and one of the great auto chases on film. With Robert Vaughn, Jacqueline Bisset. (WCI Home Video; \$55) (Mature)

**The Candidate** (1972)—Robert Redford as an idealistic lawyer lured into a dark-horse campaign for the Senate. With Peter Boyle, Melvyn Douglas and Karen Carlson. (WCI Home Video; \$55) (PG)

**Capricorn One** (1978)—Action melodrama hinging on the premise that the first manned flight to Mars was a hoax. Elliott Gould, James Brolin, Brenda Vaccaro, Telly Savalas, Hal Holbrook, Sam Waterston,

Karen Black. (Magnetic Video Corp.; \$54.95) (PG)

**The Cassandra Crossing** (1977)—Intrigue and terror aboard a Geneva-to-Stockholm express train whose passengers include deadly plague germs. Sophia Loren, Richard Harris, Ava Gardner, Burt Lancaster, Martin Sheen, Ingrid Thulin, Lee Strasberg. (Magnetic Video Corp.; \$74.95) (PG)

**Dog Day Afternoon** (1975)—Comedy/drama starring Al Pacino as a real-life bank robber who staged an inept Brooklyn heist in 1972. With John Cazale, Charles Durning, Chris Sarandon. (WCI Home Video; \$60) (R)

**The Eagle Has Landed** (1977)—Fanciful World War II story about a German plot to abduct Winston Churchill as a negotiating pawn. Michael Caine, Donald Sutherland, Robert Duvall. (Magnetic Video Corp.; \$54.95) (PG)

**Executive Action** (1973)—Wealthy right-wingers plot the assassination of John Kennedy in a fact-based, fictional account of his death. Burt Lancaster, Robert Ryan, Will Geer. (WCI Home Video; \$55) (PG)

**Exorcist II: The Heretic** (1977)—Linda Blair's subconscious undergoes a second purge by a priest (Richard Burton) and a psychiatrist (Louise Fletcher). With Max von Sydow, James Earl Jones and Ned Beatty. (WCI Home Video; \$60) (R)

**Going in Style** (1979)—George Burns, Art Carney and Lee Strasberg as three octogenarians who decide they have nothing to lose but bore-

dom by robbing a bank. (WCI Home Video; \$60) (PG)

**A Man, a Woman and a Bank** (1979)—A lighthearted caper, filmed in Vancouver. Donald Sutherland, Brooke Adams, Paul Mazursky. (Magnetic Video Corp.; \$54.95) (PG)

**The Onion Field** (1979)—Joseph Wambaugh's true-to-life suspense story about the kidnaping of two Los Angeles policemen and the murder of one, resulting in one of California's longest court cases. John Savage, James Woods, Franklyn Seales. (Magnetic Video Corp.; \$54.95) (R)

*Some movie descriptions courtesy of TV Guide magazine. Ratings are those assigned by the Motion Picture Association of America for theatrical showings.*

#### SPECIALS

**The Incredible Magic of Magic**—Magic lessons, tricks and showmanship demonstrated by professional magicians. Two 55-minute programs, \$34.95 each. (Magnetic Video Corp.)

**Miracle at Lake Placid**—Jim McKay hosts this documentary featuring the highlights of the 1980 Winter Olympics. Produced by ABC Video Enterprises. (Magnetic Video Corp.; \$49.95)

*Readers wishing to obtain more information from the distributors of the above-listed movies and specials may do so at these addresses: Magnetic Video Corp., 23434 Industrial Park Court, Farmington Hills, Mich. 48024; WCI Home Video, 75 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10019.*

**BOOKS**

A listing of some of the recently published books dealing with television.

**Both of Me**, by Mary Stuart. (Doubleday; \$13.95)—Better known as Jo on the CBS soap opera *Search for Tomorrow*, Stuart writes about her on- and off-camera life.

**Death Row**, by Bruce Jackson and Diane Christian. (Beacon

Press; \$13.95)—These interviews with inmates of the Texas State Prison's death row about the realities of life under the death penalty are the basis of a documentary scheduled for showing on several PBS stations this fall.

**Goodbye Gutenberg: The Newspaper Revolution of the 1980s**, by Anthony Smith. (Oxford University Press; \$16.95)—A look at how newspapers have adapted to new technologies and changing lifestyles, and how their role

will change in the coming years to include videotext and home-information systems.

**Life on Television**, by Bradley S. Greenberg. (ABLEX Publishing Corp., Norwood, N.J.; \$22.50 hardback, \$12.95 paper)—A scholarly examination of social behavior, minority groups, family structure and sex roles in the United States as portrayed on television.

**Listen, America**, by Jerry Falwell. (Doubleday-Galilee,

\$9.95)—The star of the popular syndicated TV show *The Old-Time Gospel Hour* calls for a return to "pro-God, pro-family" government.

**NEW IN PAPERBACK**

**Shōgun**, by James Clavell. (Dell; \$3.50)—This saga of feudal Japan, the subject of a 12-hour Paramount/NBC miniseries, is being reissued to mark the show's September appearance (see story on page 43).

**BEST SELLERS**

This list of the top 20 prerecorded videocassettes is based on sales figures from a survey of retail outlets around the country.

**1. "10"** (1979)—Featuring the Eighties' first sex symbol, Bo Derek. (WCI Home Video; \$65)

**2. The Muppet Movie** (1979)—Kermit the Frog and Miss Piggy sing and dance their way to Hollywood fame. (Magnetic Video Corp.; \$54.95)

**3. Superman** (1978)—A superbudget film starring the special effects. (WCI Home Video; \$65)

**4. Animal House** (1978)—Zany misadventures of the Delta House fraternity brothers. (MCA Videocassette, Inc.; \$60)

**5. Halloween** (1978)—Violent thriller about a knife-wielding killer. (Media Home Entertainment; \$59.95)

**6. Enter the Dragon** (1973)—Bruce Lee's last film. (WCI Home Video; \$60)

**7. The Deer Hunter** (1978)—Vietnam war epic starring Robert De Niro, Christopher Walken and Meryl Streep. (MCA Videocassette, Inc.; \$82)

**8. The Jerk** (1979)—Carl Reiner's wacky comedy, starring Steve Martin. (MCA Videocassette, Inc.; \$60)

**9. Norma Rae** (1979)—Sally Field's Oscar-winning portrayal of a courageous Southern millworker. (Magnetic Video Corp.; \$54.95)

**10. Smokey and the Bandit** (1977)—A daredevil bootlegger is pursued by the law and his girl's ex-suitor. (MCA Videocassette, Inc.; \$60)

**11. The Godfather** (1972)—Francis Ford Coppola's gangster epic about the rise and near-fall of the Corleones. (Paramount Pictures; \$79.95)

**12. Jaws** (1975)—A New England beach community is terrorized by a great white shark. (MCA Videocassette, Inc.; \$60)

**13. Emmanuelle** (1974)—Rated X. (Columbia Pictures Home Entertainment; \$69.95)

**14. The Electric Horseman** (1979)—Jane Fonda and Robert Redford in a breezy, romantic comedy. (MCA Videocassette, Inc.; \$60)

**15. Grease** (1978)—John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John in the film version of the hit musical. (Paramount Pictures; \$59.95)

**16. Debbie Does Dallas** (1978)—Rated X. (VCX; \$99.50)

**17. Blazing Saddles** (1974)—Mel Brooks' parody of Hollywood Westerns. (WCI Home Video; \$55)



Cleavon Little: "Blazing Saddles."

**18. 1941** (1979)—Steven Spielberg's farce about war fever in Los Angeles following Pearl Harbor. (MCA Videocassette, Inc.; \$60)

**19. Dracula** (1979)—Remake of the 1931 classic. (MCA Videocassette, Inc.; \$60)

**20. Battlestar Galactica** (1979)—Elaborately produced TV-movie about interplanetary wars. (MCA Videocassette, Inc.; \$60)

Retail outlets participating in our survey include:

Associated Video, Houston; Audio Center, Honolulu; Audio Video Craft, Inc., Los Angeles; Brenda's Movie House, Philadelphia; Cinema Concepts, Wethersfield, Conn.; Columbia Video Systems, Highland Park, Ill.; Concord Video Center, Stamford, Conn.; Conlon Services, Litchfield, Ill.; Cyclops Video, Sherman Oaks, Cal.; Discotronics, Inc., Cranbury, N.J.; Future World Video, Scottsdale, Ariz.; Giffen Video, Staten Island, N.Y.; Godwin Radio Inc./Godwin Video Centers, Birmingham, Ala.; Henry's Camera, Los Angeles; Home Entertainment Emporium, Manhattan Beach, Cal.; Jantzen Beach Magnavox Home Entertainment Center, Portland, Ore.; Kaleidoscope Video Shops, Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Okla.; Media Associates, Mountain View, Cal.; Media Concepts, Inc., St. Petersburg, Fla.; Barney Miller's, Inc., Lexington, Ky.; Modern Communications, St. Louis; Newbury TV and Appliances, New Bedford, Mass.; Nichols Electronics, Wichita,

Kan.; Northern Lights Video, Pacific Grove, Cal.; Precision TV and Video, Bellwood, Ill.; Record Rendezvous, Cleveland; Recycle Light and Sound, Ann Arbor, Mich.; Red Fox, Elizabethville, Pa.; Select Film Library, New York; Self's Electronic Entertainment Center, Clovis, N.M.; The Shark Video Corp., Metairie, La.; Stansbury Stereo, Baltimore; Televideo Systems, Richmond, Va.; Thomas Film Video, Royal Oak, Mich.; Valias TV, Denver; Video Audio Electronics, Williamsport, Pa.; Video Cassette, Phoenix, Ariz.; Video Cassettes, Etc., Lubbock, Texas; The Video Connection, Toledo, Ohio; Video Corporation of America, Edison, N.J.; Video Dimensions, New York; Video Industries of America, Council Bluffs, Iowa; Video Library, Torrance, Cal.; The Video Library Company, Baia Cynwyd, Pa.; Video Mart, San Bernardino, Cal.; Video Services, Towson, Md.; Videospace, Bellevue, Wash.; Video Specialties, Houston; Videostop, Beverly Hills; The Video Store, Gretna, La.; Video 2000, San Diego; Visual Adventures, Cleveland.



Julia Child brings a touch of cooking class to Good Morning America.



Phil Donahue gets an award and a wife.

## PASSAGES

### WED

Actress **Sandy Duncan**, of Broadway's "Peter Pan," and dancer Don Correia.

**Carl "Doc" Severinsen**, band leader on *The Tonight Show*, and **Emily Marshall**, TV writer and story editor (*Rhoda*, *WKRP in Cincinnati*, *Angie*).

Actor **Robert Ginty** (*Black Sheep Squadron*) and actress **Francine Tacker** (*The Goodtime Girls*); the couple played Anderson and Logan, respectively, in *The Paper Chase*.

**Phil Donahue**, talk-show host, and actress **Marlo Thomas** (*That Girl*, "Free to Be... You and Me").

Boston Pops conductor **John Williams** (PBS's *Evening at Pops*) and photographer/interior designer Samantha Winslow.

### FILED

For divorce: **Anita Bryant**, former TV pitchwoman for orange juice and anti-gay crusader, from her husband of 20 years, Bob Green.

### APPOINTED

**Thomas H. Wyman**, formerly vice chairman of the Pillsbury Company, as president and chief executive officer of CBS Inc., succeeding John D. Backe.

**Mike Weinblatt**, previously president of NBC's Enterprises Division, as president of Showtime, the Nation's second-largest pay-TV network.

**Thomas D. Tannenbaum**, formerly executive vice president of Columbia Pictures TV, as president of MGM Television.

**Irwin Segelstein**, previously president of NBC's TV Stations division, to the position of president of NBC Television.

**Robert D. Wood**, former president of CBS-TV, to the presidency of the Metromedia Producers Corporation.

### SIGNED

**Tanya Roberts**, as the third angel on ABC's *Charlie's Angels*. Roberts replaces **Shelley Hack**.

**Dorothy Benham**, Miss America of 1977, as co-host, with Ron Ely, of the Miss America Pageant.

**Bert Parks**, former host of the Miss America Pageant, to a seven-year contract as emcee of the Miss Young International pageant.

Chef **Julia Child** (*The French Chef*) and ABC News commentator **Hughes Rudd**, as contributors to *Good Morning America*.

**Nancy Foreman**, formerly co-host of WKBW-TV's *AM Buffalo* (N.Y.), as a lifestyle reporter on the *Today* show.

**Betsy Aaron**, co-anchor of CBS's kidvid news magazine *30 Minutes*, as a correspondent for NBC News.

**Frank Blair**, former newscaster of the *Today* show, as co-host of PBS's *Over Easy*, with Hugh Downs.

ABC News correspondents **Bill Zimmerman** and **Bernard Shaw**, as anchormen for the Cable News Network.

**Sandi Freeman**, previously co-host of WLS-TV's *AM Chicago*, as host of the Cable News Network's evening talk show, *Cross Talk*.

### ASSIGNED

NBC News correspondent **Edwin Newman**, as anchor of NBC's new two-minute news broadcasts at 10 A.M.

### DISMISSED

**Maurice R. Valente**, president of RCA Corp., after six months in office.

### HONORED

**Phil Donahue**, with the Silver Satellite Award, the highest honor given by American Women in Radio and Television, for outstanding accomplishment in the field of broadcasting.

ABC News' vice president for

program development **Av Westin**, producer **Bernard Cohen** and economic editor **Dan Cordtz**, with a 1979 Media Award for Economic Understanding for their program "1979: Stretching the Shrinking Dollar," by the Amos Tuck School of Business Administration of Dartmouth College.

**Bob Keeshan**, better known as Captain Kangaroo, as the Television Father of the Year 1980, by the National Father's Day Committee.

Comedian **Steve Allen**, for "30 years of outstanding contributions to TV," by the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, at its Governor's Ball.

### DIED

**Arthur C. Nielsen Sr.**, 83, philanthropist and founder of the A.C. Nielsen Co., the most widely followed authority on TV ratings.

**Ray Rennahan**, 84, Oscar-winning cinematographer ("Gone with the Wind"), who directed the photography for 120 films, including the first full-color feature, "Becky Sharp," and over 500 TV features and series episodes.

Author **Elliott Arnold**, 67, whose 1947 novel "Blood Brother" was the basis for both the movie "Broken Arrow" and a subsequent TV series of the same name.

**Robert J. de la Torre**, 66, deputy director of the American Forces Radio and Television Service in Los Angeles for some 34 years.

Playwright **Charles Knox Robinson**, 79, who produced the television show *Big Town* and wrote a number of teleplays, including "Theater Guild of the Air" and "Suspense," in addition to the theatrical film "Taxi."

Actor **Milburn Stone**, 75, who played Doc Adams on *Guns-moke* for 20 years; Stone also acted in more than 150 films, including "Arrowhead."

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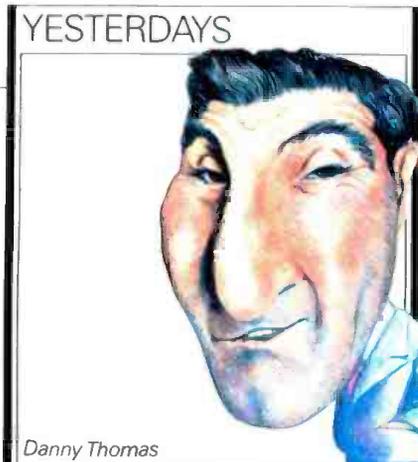
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## YESTERDAYS



Danny Thomas

reports on a group of Japanese girls who received atomic burns during WWII and have come to the U.S. for treatment. ... On the dramatic series *Undercurrent*, a freak accident at an atomic plant leaves a technician able to "see" into the future. ... Art Linkletter's *House Party* receives a visit from producer-director Alfred Hitchcock. ... On *The Danny Thomas Show*, Rusty decides he's been kidded about his curls long enough and demands a "butch" haircut.

Woody Allen and Lee Marvin headline *The Ed Sullivan Show*. ... The *Today* show talks with Sino-Soviet expert Zbigniew Brzezinski; Mike Douglas welcomes dancer Bonnie Franklin from Broadway's "Applause"; and an evening of *The Tonight Show* offers William F. Buckley Jr. and the Cowsills.

### 25 Years Ago: August 1955

Movie attendance in the U.S. is now estimated to be 30 million a week—the same number of people who watch a popular TV show in one evening. ... Live productions this month include Ogden Nash and S. J. Perelman's musical comedy "One Touch of Venus," with songs by Kurt Weill and Ogden Nash; Roald Dahl's "The Man from the South," narrated and illustrated by noted cartoonist Charles Addams; "Fear Strikes Out," with Tab Hunter (in his dramatic television debut) as baseball player Jim Piersall; and "A Matter of Life or Death," based on an article by writer Hodding Carter Jr. ... At a meeting of the American Bar Association in Philadelphia, TV tests its ability to cover courtroom proceedings unobtrusively. ... *You Are There* travels to Canandaigua, N.Y., June 18, 1873, where Susan B. Anthony and other suffragettes are on trial for voting in an election. Douglas Edwards fills in for the series' regular host, Walter Cronkite. ... *Today*

### 10 Years Ago: August 1970

Television focuses on America's drug problem: Edwin Newman narrates "A Trip to Nowhere," an examination of the case histories of two young drug addicts; Carol Burnett and Arte Johnson talk about drug abuse on "If You Turn On"; and on "The Legal Pusher," James Coburn discusses the abuse of legally manufactured drugs. ... *Johnny Cash Presents the Everly Brothers*, *Andy Williams Presents Ray Stevens* and *Comedy Tonight* (with host Robert Klein) are summer replacement series. ... News specials include: "Reply to the President," a discussion of U.S. policy in Indochina by Senators George McGovern and J. William Fulbright; "Unions and the Blacks," a look at the attitudes toward black construction-union members; "We Have Met the Enemy and He Is Us," a report on the population explosion; and "The Measure of Our Torment," an analysis of rock music and the generation gap by anthropologist Margaret Mead. ...

### 5 Years Ago: August 1975

Television now attracts 22 million more adults daily than do newspapers, according to one study. ... Two critically acclaimed TV dramas are rerun this month: "Catholics," starring Martin Sheen and Trevor Howard; and "The Law," with Judd Hirsch and Gary Busey. ... One year after his resignation, former President Richard Nixon agrees to do a series of 90-minute interviews with David Frost. Frost won't disclose the terms, but it is estimated that Nixon will eventually realize \$1 million from the talks. ... America's answer to *Upstairs, Downstairs* begins on CBS. Called *Beacon Hill*, the show focuses on a wealthy Boston family, the Lassiters, and their staff of servants. ... *An ABC News Closeup* investigates why auto makers delayed in supplying a growing market for small, economical cars. ... On *Dinah!*, Barbara Bain and Martin Landau talk about their new syndicated series, *Space: 1999*, along with the show's costume designer Rudi Gernreich. ... On the *Almost Anything Goes* national championship match, four towns slug it out in events called "Abnormal Sardines," "Running Breakfast" and "You Bet Your Loaf." ■

## COMING UP IN PANORAMA

Who Shot J.R. Ewing?  
Some Top Mystery  
Writers  
Solve the Case

Visiting Pittsburgh for the  
Super Bowl of Cable

The Fall Season:  
What You'll See—and  
Why

Probing a Network's  
Climb: David Frost  
Interviews ABC News  
Chief Boone Arledge

A Handy Guide to the  
New TV Sets

A Special Report:  
Is Cable's 24-Hour News  
Better Than Network  
Broadcasts?

The Life of Sophia  
Loren—in Pictures and  
Her Own Words

Is There a Case for  
Government Lying to the  
Press?  
By George Reedy

Thrusts and Parries:  
The Lively Adventures of  
America's TV Critics

ation) as so much smut. We are sheltered from life and satiated with executions—Gary Gilmore, Bill Stewart, Mafia murders, and now a documentary on suicide ("Final Statement," Panoramic View, June). Strong stuff, which should be neutralized with a bit more insight into *this* side of mortality. How are people surviving? What are the new lifestyles, trends, forecasts, etc.?

I'm not sitting in judgment over the reporting of either end of the human continuum. Rather, I believe that time should be more equitably apportioned.

*Ann Rubin  
Oakland, N.J.*

Amazing! No sooner do I read about Loni Anderson being disturbed by jokes about her bosom ("The American Dream Is the Blonde Bombshell," June) than I see a photo of her in the back of Playboy magazine where she is obviously, to put it mildly, unencumbered by brassiere. For someone who does not like jokes made about her breasts, she certainly isn't shy about showing them off.

*Steve Bailey  
Orange Park, Fla.*

I've noticed that cable TV has now added an "all-news network" to go along with the "all-sports network." How about adding on an "all-weather network"? This station should be on 24 hours, as the weather is always changing. It should give worldwide weather, not for just one city. Being on 24 hours, it could give constant updates on: tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, tidal waves, etc. It could give temperatures from all over the world. It could give the weather and explain how the weather is forecast and why it changes.

*Roger Gatewood  
Danville, Va.*

**CORRECTION:** In Cyra McFadden's July Impressions column, "Cause of Death: Breaking Too Many Rules," we inadvertently referred to Beau Bridges, who starred with Helen Shaver in *United States*, as Jeff Bridges.

Correspondence for this column should be addressed to: Letters Department, PANORAMA, Box 950, Wayne, Pa. 19087. No anonymous correspondence will be published. Letters may be abridged because of space limitations. We regret that it will not be possible for us to reply individually to letter writers.

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# REAR VIEW

By HARRY STEIN

## Have Name, Will Huckster

A couple of months ago, in the lobby of my building, I ran across my neighbor, Howie Meltzer, in tears.

"What's wrong, Howie?" I asked, placing a hand on his shoulder.

Wordlessly he thrust a crumpled piece of paper at me—a page ripped from *Advertising Age*. The story thereon described the recent defection of a trio of ex-athletes—Mickey Mantle, Walt Frazier and Nick Buoniconti—from the Miller Lite team to Bud Natural Light.

"Comon, Howie," I said, forcing a smile, "this is no reason for tears."

"But you don't understand! Mickey Mantle is my idol. He shouldn't act this way!"

"Howie, you're 27 years old. It's about time you faced that this is the way the world works."

But little Howie was in no mood for homilies. "I don't care!" he said, running into his apartment and slamming the door behind him.

Coincidentally, just a week later I was at the home of my friend David, who is a good, serious writer. We were watching TV while he leafed through *The New Yorker*, which is a good, serious magazine. Suddenly, strangled little whimpering noises began coming from his corner of the room.

"What's the matter?" I asked, alarmed.

He held up the magazine and pointed to an ad. It featured a large photograph of a wristwatch, a sketch of a middle-aged man and the words "Rolex. For those who set the measure of the times. John Cheever." "Detail illuminates John Cheever's writing," went a snatch of the text, "just as detail inspires every Rolex craftsman."

"You're disappointed in John Cheever, aren't you, David?" I asked.

"Cr...cr...crushed," he finally whimpered.

I understood David's feelings. Cheever was, after all, the writer who once turned down an immense sum from *The Saturday Evening Post* for a

short story because he felt it belonged in a more literary publication.

But I myself couldn't get any more worked up over it than I could over Mickey Mantle and his beer. Me, I got over being shocked years ago—when Sir Laurence Olivier began telling me, using all the skills honed by 50 years of playing Shakespeare, to buy a Polaroid. I began taking an acute pleasure in guessing which notables would do what, and for how much. The chairman of the Senate Watergate Committee peddling credit cards? Why the hell not? The first man on the moon fronting for Chrysler? A small step for mankind, I say.

Indeed, I have been disappointed that some of my favorite celebrities have *not* yet consented to do commercials. Knowing a little something about how these things work, I suspect that these people have kept themselves under wraps in order to jack up their asking price—a canny ploy, to be sure, but one that might backfire. No one should overestimate the patience, not to mention the attention span, of us, the American viewing public. If they don't show up on the home screen soon, we're likely to forget about them entirely.

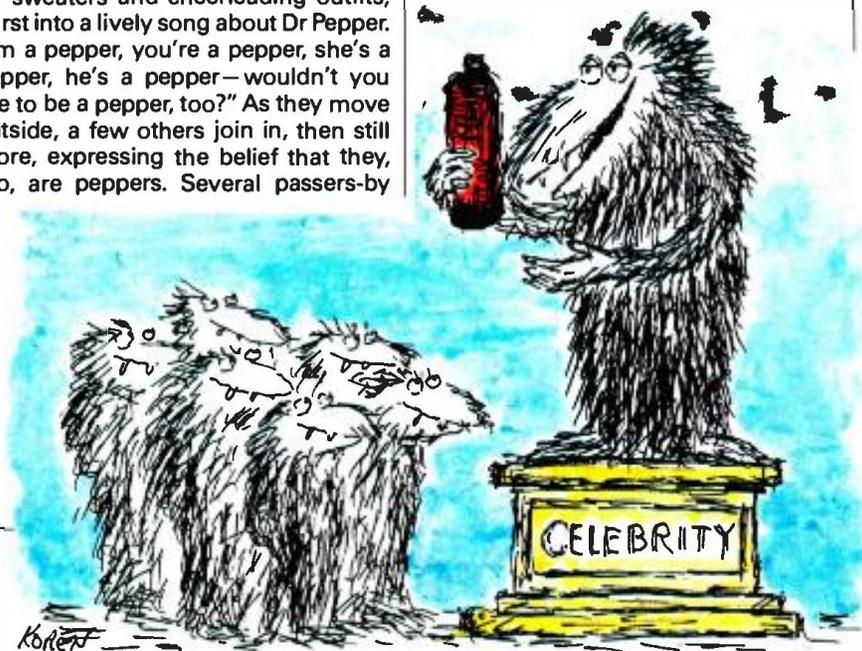
Let us hope, then, that they come to their senses, so that in the next few months we might see the following:

The setting is a soda fountain in a college town. Abruptly the young people at the counter, all of them dressed in letter sweaters and cheerleading outfits, burst into a lively song about Dr Pepper. "I'm a pepper, you're a pepper, she's a pepper, he's a pepper—wouldn't you like to be a pepper, too?" As they move outside, a few others join in, then still more, expressing the belief that they, too, are peppers. Several passers-by

join the growing parade, then a traffic cop, then Popeye the Sailor Man. Suddenly, at the tail end of the procession, we catch sight of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the Soviet dissident, who jumps into the air and shouts in broken English, "Me pepper, too!"

A solitary figure, in a checkered hunting jacket and peaked cap, is walking through the New England woods. It is autumn. He stops, looks pensive, turns toward the camera and speaks. "You don't know me. I'm the author of one of the most famous books of all time; a lot of people read it, I'm not kidding. But when I go into the general store for provisions, they treat me like I'm a phony slob, which is pretty annoying, if you think about it. I mean, I'm a pretty good guy and all, and these dumb jerks act like I just barfed on the goddamn apples or something. Boy, does that annoy me. So what I do is carry this American Express card. It lets me buy all the junk I want and nobody says a word about me not doing too much with my life right now, which is kind of a problem with me. The truth is, sometimes when I buy something, they shake my hand and slap me on the back and thank me so much it gets goddamn embarrassing."

With a burst of an IBM Selectric, the name clatters onto the screen: J.D. SALINGER. "The American Express Card. I don't leave home without it, or much at all, if you really wanna know the truth. But I don't feel like going into that right now." ■



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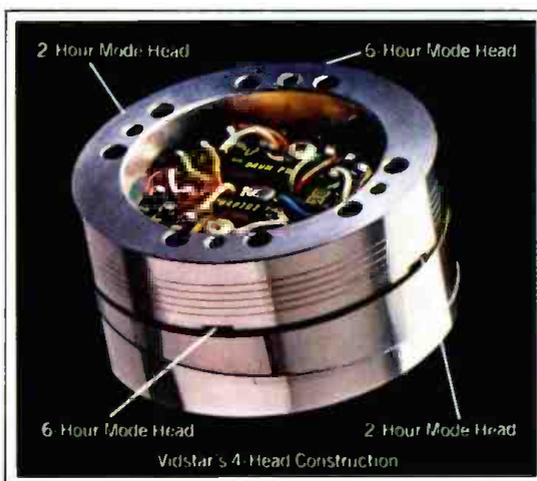
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