BROADCASTING THE LOCAL NEWS

The Early Years of Pittsburgh's KDKA-TV

Lynn Boyd Hinds

WorldRadioHistory

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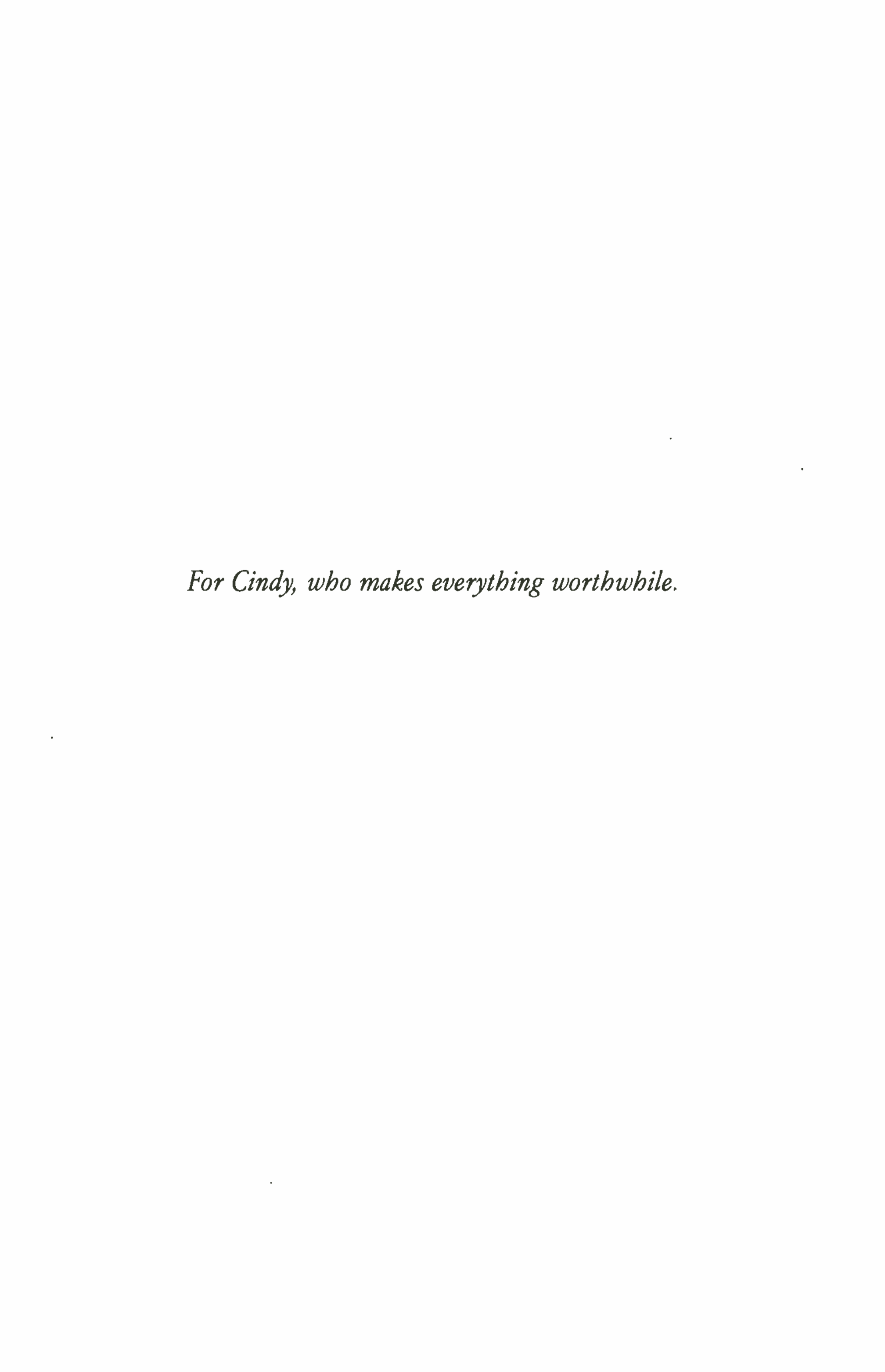

For Cindy, who makes everything worthwhile.

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Preface

Pittsburghers saw their first television program at 8:30 on Tuesday evening, January 11, 1949. They tuned to channel 3 to watch WDTV, owned and operated by the Allen B. DuMont Laboratories Inc. The occasion was AT&T's connecting of a coaxial cable to link network television from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River. All four networks, CBS, NBC, ABC, and DuMont, shared a "Golden Spike" ceremony—the name indicating their conviction that this link was to television what the Golden Spike ceremony at Promontory Point, Utah, in 1869 had been to the transcontinental railroad. This may have been a hyperbolic comparison, but it was an important milestone for the young broadcast industry that was undergoing a major metamorphosis.

During the decade following World War II, people in many cities like Pittsburgh were part of the first major turning point in American broadcasting: a radio-listening public became a television-watching public. Broadcasting was scarcely two decades old when it underwent that transition. As recently as 1926, radio was securing its role in popular culture. About 600 stations, the maximum most thought possible, were broadcasting a patchwork of "talks" and live music. A rich tapestry of radio genres followed in the next decades: comedy, detective shows, westerns, soap operas, musical programs, and a smattering of news. By the end of World War II most homes had a radio, and listening to the radio had become America's number-one leisure activity. Then in 1948 Milton Berle and his "Texaco Star Theater" did for a new medium called television what "Amos 'n' Andy" had done for the old medium of radio. As J. Fred MacDonald once put it, "it captured the fancy of the nation and turned a popular medium into a mass medium." The golden age of radio suddenly became the golden age of television—or so says the received tradition.

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The reality is not so simple. The years that it took for television to find the economic viability to become successful were years more of evolution than of revolution. Most accounts of that period have been written from the perspective of the networks, yet even network television programs were not available in homes across America until local stations were built and began to broadcast. Some of the programs were from the networks, but many originated locally. The story of those local stations has not been adequately told.

Radio did not simply lie down and die. Broadcasting after World War II *was* AM radio, and the new communications technology found breaking radio's dominance to be more difficult than expected. Television had a profound effect on radio—the networks sooner than local stations—although even on network the last vestige of old-time radio, in the form of the soap opera, did not vanish until 1960. Local radio stations, which had a tenacity of their own, would ultimately be forced into a format of news updates, weather, and playing phonograph records.

But local radio was having a profound effect on television. Radio, in its "old-time" form, supplied local television with program ideas and talent. That is most apparent in local television news. Then radio developed a more aggressive news style, which in turn had an effect also on evolving television news broadcasts. It is impossible to explicate the inventing of local television news without turning again and again to local radio news.

Local television news has a history of its own, though. If one were to suggest to any pioneer of local television in any city that the networks invented a certain way of doing television news, the reply would be the same reply I myself have received on more than one occasion: "Like hell they did!" The networks had an influence, of course, but many other sources had equal or greater influence. Once built, television stations needed programs to fill the schedule, so they invented ways to develop programs specifically for the medium—newscasts among them.

This account focuses on television news, but it is also the broader story of the pioneers at one local station, although they never saw themselves as pioneers. These men and women had little if any experience with television, but they developed techniques for the new medium. At Pittsburgh's WDTV, later KDKA, they invented local television news. This does not mean, though, that the Pittsburgh station was either the first or normative, for television news was being invented in numerous other cities too.

The story of what happened in Pittsburgh is a metaphor for all those

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stations. Pittsburgh is an appropriate city to study, not only because its roots in broadcast history are deep, but also because its first station took a vigorous approach to developing local television in general and television news in particular.

When DuMont introduced television to Pittsburgh in 1949, WDTV began to do news on the first full day of broadcasting with a program called "Pitt Parade," done entirely on film, in the manner of the motion picture newsreel. In 1952, a full fifteen-minute newscast, "The World Tonight," was scheduled in radio's traditional 11:00 nightly time slot. Next, a more aggressive news-gathering style, developed by local independent radio stations, made its way into television news, and accounts of local events, usually accompanied by pictures, became standard practice.

The "conventions" of television news—the practices, customs, traditions, and forms that grew out of its early history, and all their assets and liabilities—evolved slowly but surely out of that first decade and were passed down from one generation of television journalists to another. And once established, they were accepted as normative and have been slow to change. How they were devised, or adapted from radio or motion pictures, is part of the story of television news. Fred Allen put it well: "Imitation is the sincerest form of television."

How these conventions have been and are used is also an important part of the story. Conventions give the television news story a seamless appearance, as though it is showing reality itself. Hours of audio, video, and words collected over a day's work are condensed into stories no longer than a minute or two each for the viewing audience. For the most part, though, television reporters and audiences are not aware that these conventions are being used. Skillful use of conventional techniques hides the fact that each news story is actually a highly constructed interpretation of reality and that the conventions themselves provide the frame within which the news is presented and read.

I learned to do television news from some of the pioneers. During the 1970s, while working at WTAE-TV in Pittsburgh, I learned professional television reporting from people who had developed television news in Pittsburgh. Riding in a news unit on the way to many a story, I heard their accounts of the early years. After leaving television to enter the ranks of college teaching, I wanted to gather the stories in a more systematic manner.

A generous research initiation grant by The Pennsylvania State University enabled me to collect some thirty oral history interviews with many of

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the people who played significant roles in bringing television to Pittsburgh. Their recollections make an important contribution to this book. Unless otherwise noted in the text or the notes, all quotations and information attributed to those people are from these interviews, which are listed in Appendix A.

The audiotapes and transcripts of the oral history interviews are archived at the University of Pittsburgh's Hillman Library. Both the film and the scripts from Pitt Parade are part of the KDKA news archives there and, together with the oral histories, contain substantial historical material about the early days. The archives are an important source for those who want to study the history of local television news and the communication revolution that transformed the way local communities get their news. Documents are scarce; much local history exists only in the memories of the pioneers of television. But the story deserves to be preserved and told.

In addition to the grant from The Pennsylvania State University that helped me collect the interviews, I am also grateful to my colleagues who read parts of the manuscript and made useful suggestions: Ron Schie, Bill Seymour, and Ted Hupp. A special thanks is also due to David Crantz, who is friend to many of the people mentioned in this book. He was tremendously helpful in contacting persons for interviews and showed patience with me when I called him with "just one more question."

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Introduction

TV News

A Window on Reality

The city of Pittsburgh has a long and venerable history of broadcasting, beginning when radio was called "the wireless" and extending through the birth of broadcasting and radio's "Golden Age" down to television's earliest years, from 1949 to 1960, the focus of this study. The name "Westinghouse" was an integral part of broadcasting in Pittsburgh from the beginning. The fame of KDKA radio's first broadcast on Election Night 1920 is well established. KDKA was owned and operated by Westinghouse, and its broadcasts originated from the roof of Westinghouse's East Pittsburgh plant.

But Pittsburgh and Westinghouse were associated with broadcasting even earlier, from what is considered the first broadcast of the human voice. A University of Pittsburgh professor and former Westinghouse engineer, Reginald Fessenden, made that first radio broadcast. With two Pittsburgh investors, Hay Walker Jr. and Thomas H. Given, Fessenden had formed the National Electric Signaling Company, and it was from the company's

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experimental station in Brant Rock, Massachusetts, that Fessenden made a Christmas Eve 1906 broadcast, playing carols and reading poems. One can only imagine the amazement of radio operators on ships at sea who for the first time heard a human voice through their headphones, rather than the dots and dashes of "the wireless," as it existed in those days. Robert St. John has said that Fessenden's broadcast is considered the "first real radio broadcast of history," and certainly the first attempt at programming, while Sidney Head and Christopher Sterling have called it the event that marked the start of broadcasting.[1] According to Rupert Maclaurin, Fessenden was "the first important American inventor to experiment with wireless," and his invention, the heterodyne, has often been called the "second greatest thing in the radio art."[2]

If Fessenden's voice, requesting that anyone hearing his 1906 Christmas Eve broadcast write to him, was the first to be heard over the air, Frank Conrad's voice a decade later is the more famous. Dr. Frank Conrad, who had joined Westinghouse as an engineer at age sixteen, became interested in the wireless.[3] He built an experimental station, 8XK, in his garage in Wilkinsburg, a Pittsburgh suburb, and another at Westinghouse's nearby East Pittsburgh plant, to test equipment. When the United States entered World War I in April 1917, amateur operators were ordered off the air, but because Westinghouse was building radio equipment for the military, Conrad was allowed to continue his testing.

During those days of testing, Conrad initiated many of the aspects that radio would later adopt, some of them audience driven, through the daily flow of mail in response to his broadcasts. By 1919 he found that using his voice was tiring, so he substituted phonograph records. Requests for specific songs led to an agreement with the Hamilton Music Store of Wilkinsburg to supply him with records in exchange for a plug. Conrad was soon broadcasting on a regular basis for two hours each Wednesday and Saturday evening at 7:30. To meet audience demand, he added baseball scores and live performances, even doing a remote by means of a wire stretched from the garage to the house, with his son, Francis, playing the piano. By 1920 the audience had grown enough that the Joseph Horne Company, a Pittsburgh department store, ran an ad in the *Pittsburgh Sun,* informing the public that they could purchase, for ten dollars and up, a receiving set to hear Conrad. The ad led Westinghouse executive H. P. Davis to envision a market for the radio equipment that had been a source of profit during the war.

Thus was born the idea to establish a station to supply broadcasts to

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stimulate sales of radio sets, and the idea worked. Westinghouse brought out the Aeriola Jr., a small crystal set that sold for $25, then the Aeriola Sr., the first home receiver to use a vacuum tube, at $60. Before the first year of broadcasting had ended, Westinghouse was producing the Aeriola Grand with a built-in loudspeaker and multiple vacuum tubes, which eliminated the need for headphones, and sold it for $175. The concept of using radio to sell equipment rather than to sell products by advertising was one that would be repeated when television came along.

On November 2, 1920, KDKA radio went on the air with the results of the Harding-Cox Presidential election. The story has often been told of how Leo Rosenberg, recruited from the Westinghouse advertising department, read election returns telephoned from the *Pittsburgh Press* between election results.[4] KDKA went on the air at 6:00 P.M. and continued to broadcast until noon the next day. To guarantee a radio audience for the broadcast, Westinghouse gathered executives and their spouses at the nearby Edgewood Club. Public gatherings to hear election returns were common in those days—for example, the Swissvale Board of Trade in suburban Pittsburgh had arranged with Western Union Telegraph for a special wire at the Municipal Building. "The committee in charge will provide an entertainment program," said the newspaper article announcing the gathering.[5] So while getting together to hear election returns was not unusual, gathering to hear returns over the radio was revolutionary. The group at the Edgewood Club telephoned the broadcasters at the East Pittsburgh plant to request less music and more talk. As the rain fell on Pittsburgh that evening, the audience that stayed home to listen to the broadcast was probably larger than anyone could have predicted.

KDKA continued to broadcast, at first just an hour each evening, then gradually more and more. The earliest years saw a series of radio firsts in Pittsburgh. If George H. Douglas is correct that the radio announcer was "the first personification of the mass media in America," then the name Harold W. Arlin is notable. By the end of KDKA radio's inaugural year, Arlin had replaced Rosenberg, and thus became the first person to earn a living as a radio announcer. Arlin wore a tuxedo, which was typical of the formal style of radio announcers in the early period.

The year 1921 saw many KDKA radio firsts. On January 2 a religious service was broadcast—a remote from Calvary Episcopal Church with two Westinghouse engineers donning robes to join the choir in order to monitor the sound.[6] Two weeks later a remote from the Duquesne Club broadcast a speech by Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover. A remote from the

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William Penn Hotel broadcast the voice of Former President Theodore Roosevelt speaking to the Pittsburgh Press Club banquet. On April 11 sportswriter Florent Gibson offered a blow-by-blow account of a no-decision prizefight between Johnny Ray and Johnny Dundee from Pittsburgh's Motor Square Garden. Like an early method of announcing baseball games by re-creating the game from the wire, Gibson telephoned his account to Arlin, who repeated the news over the air. Arlin described radio's first baseball broadcast from Forbes Field on August 5, as the Pirates defeated the Phillies 8 to 5. On August 4, KDKA broadcast the U.S. Davis Cup tennis match from the Allegheny Country Club, and on October 8 a description of the University of Pittsburgh's 21–13 victory over West Virginia's football team could be heard by the limited number of people that owned a receiver. Politics too were added to the broadcast menu, as KDKA gave air time to three candidates for the office of mayor of Pittsburgh.

KDKA was part of the first successful radio network hookup. On January 4, 1923, WEAF in New York attempted a link with WNAC in Boston, but interference made the test less than successful, and AT&T learned that a special kind of cable was needed. By June 23 what would eventually become the coaxial cable was ready, and WEAF was connected to WGY in Schenectady, to KYW in Chicago, and to KDKA in Pittsburgh. This time the radio connection that would lead to "chain broadcasting" worked quite well. Soon Westinghouse built a studio so that live music could replace phonograph records. The first studio had been a tent atop the East Pittsburgh plant. When noise became a problem, the tent was moved to a room inside, because keeping the tent was thought to help with acoustics. When KDKA built a studio downtown, the tent was replaced with drapes. Westinghouse soon acquired a second station, WBZ in Boston, and a third, WJZ in Newark, New Jersey. It is interesting that as Westinghouse added stations many of the precedents set in Pittsburgh were replicated. From the beginning, the strong tendency for broadcasting to follow precedent was notable. KDKA would develop and maintain a strong presence in radio, broadcasting with 50,000 watts on a clear channel, and so it continues today.

Despite the traditional link of Westinghouse with broadcasting, the name associated with the first station when television arrived in Pittsburgh in 1949 was DuMont.[7] Allen B. DuMont's major role in the early years of television is often overlooked. When he left the DeForest Company to begin work on a cathode-ray tube in 1931, television broadcasting on an experimental basis had just begun. With an investment of just $500, DuMont

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began work in the basement of his New Jersey home, and by 1935 he had incorporated DuMont Labs to develop and manufacture the first practical cathode television tube. Then in April 1939 NBC did a highly publicized broadcast from the World's Fair in New York, creating a surge of optimism about the coming of television to American homes.[8] Soon as many as eighteen manufacturers announced plans to produce television sets, but it was DuMont that had the first television set on the market, a 14-inch set that sold for $295.

The outbreak of World War II put a sudden hold on the several television stations that had begun to broadcast sporadically, and all but nine shut down.[9] During the war, the NBC, CBS, and DuMont stations in New York continued to broadcast, taking turns being on the air just one night each week. During this period, DuMont was the only one with live in-studio productions. By 1944 the three stations, still taking turns, managed to broadcast every night, with NBC on the air Mondays and Saturdays, CBS on Thursdays and Fridays, and DuMont taking up Sundays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays.[10]

Soon after the end of the war, applications to build and operate local stations began to arrive at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Factories that had been pumping out wartime electronic equipment were converted to building home receiving sets, in a manner reminiscent of radio after World War I. In late 1946, television sets, notably those built by RCA and by DuMont, were rolling off assembly lines and into department stores. The DuMont plant in Clifton, New Jersey, was the world's largest cathode-ray-tube maker and the first to put a 19-inch set on the market. DuMont had added a second station, WTTG in Washington, D.C., to its original WABD in New York, and by 1946 the two were connected by coaxial cable to form a network. In 1948 DuMont began the first regular daytime television programming and held a construction permit from the FCC to build its third station, in Pittsburgh.

Local television programming had barely begun when, on September 30, 1948, the FCC declared a freeze on licenses for new stations, ostensibly to study frequency allocations and to solve the problems of co-channel interference among stations that had been built too close together. When the freeze went into effect, there were just thirty-seven stations broadcasting in twenty-two cities. By the time the freeze was lifted, nearly four years later, only seventy-one additional stations—already approved before the freeze began—had been added. DuMont's Pittsburgh station was one that began to broadcast during the freeze. From 1949, when it went on the air as WDTV as

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part of a "Golden Spike" ceremony, until 1955, when DuMont was forced to sell to Westinghouse (which changed the call letters to KDKA), the station had no real competition in Pittsburgh. In fact, there was no real competition until 1957 and 1958, when two other stations ended the monopoly.

In its developmental stages, WDTV, like stations in many cities, created a variety of local programs, such as talk, quiz, and variety shows, musical programs, and newscasts, but over the years the majority of local productions have been replaced by network and syndicated fare. The one form of programming that has endured is local television news, which constitutes the bulk of local television production today. One difficulty in reconstructing the history of early television news is that current news conventions are so familiar that they seem timeless. Contemporary forms and practices of local television news seem so normative that it is difficult to believe they were actually "invented" in the formative years of commercial television. Jim Berry, who spent thirty years with WTAE-TV in Pittsburgh, working his way up from the mail room to become a tape editor for news, said it well:

> Things we developed as we were growing up in this business have become rules now, and often, as with a lot of rules, sometimes they don't apply any longer. Maybe there's some extenuating circumstance that makes the rule not valid. I was aware of the reason behind it and why the rule exists, so sometimes I can see where maybe the rule has to be updated, but maybe your students, they just see it as a rule, and they don't see the reason behind it.

The television news we take for granted today has a complex history, and the "reasons behind" its practices are important for understanding how contemporary local news came to be and for analyzing how it functions in our society today.

Analyses of the news media usually ignore local television news and focus instead on the national media and their influence on domestic and foreign events, particularly their influence on Presidential elections. But William Henry says: "When critics and opinion leaders talk about TV news, they almost always mean the nightly network news. When the public talks about news, it is just as likely to mean local news, for which ratings are generally higher and the total number of hours watched is considerably larger."[11] Local news broadcasts affect how people understand local problems.

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In 1968, the Land Report surveyed 329 commercial stations across the nation, noting that about two-thirds of Americans obtained most of their news from television and concluding: "Today news is *the* major element in local programming, and the local television station has become the chief source of information for the country at large."[12] Local news gives people a sense of local identity. It shapes what they think of the region they live in, and the way they think of themselves as a community. Local news deals with issues, people, places, things, and events that affect viewers directly: the schools their children attend, how the local government spends their tax dollars, neighborhood events that affect people they know, how local sports teams are faring, and what tomorrow's weather will be. If "the community in which everyday life takes place is the city or the suburb, not the nation,"[13] then local news plays a central role in public life.

Local television news is ubiquitous. Today there are more than 1,000 local commercial television stations broadcasting in more than 200 markets. More than 600 of those stations are affiliated with one of the three major networks—ABC, CBS, or NBC—but the vast majority produce their own newscasts. Local stations have learned that being number one in news is usually equivalent to being number one in ratings in the local broadcast market. More than 100 stations are affiliated with the recently formed Fox network, and many Fox stations are now producing their own newscasts. Many of the more than 300 independent stations do some news.[14]

Local stations produce mostly news programs. While about 90 percent of local station broadcasts originate somewhere else—that is, from a network or a syndicator of independently produced programs—approximately 10 percent are produced locally. And of that 10 percent, the vast majority are news programs. Moreover, stations have been expanding their newscasts. Local stations do newscasts in the early morning, local news inserts during the morning network talk shows, news at noon, and news in the evening and late at night. Many stations now have an hour-long newscast in the late afternoon and early evening, and some stations in larger markets offer two or more hours of news; some stations have a four-hour news broadcast each Saturday morning.

There are several reasons that the development of local television news has been neglected as a subject of study, despite its strong presence. First, it has been assumed that the effort that went into news in the early years of local television was inconsequential. Labeling this "the light bulb theory," Jim Snyder says that some "seem to think that everyone in local news was just muddling along, doing their craven, mediocre thing, until the early

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seventies when . . . the light bulb went on 'over the collective heads of station executives' as they discovered news programming was a money maker."[15]

But local television news did not simply spring forth whole and intact in its modern form in the last two decades. One network vice-president said in 1949:

> Television is growing, changing, adjusting. It's a field where there is no established taste, no formula. While its audience is untrained and still developing, television is a challenge to creative imaginations to learn the basic characteristics of the medium and then devise suitable material for it.[16]

The pioneers of television news did just that: they invented suitable ways to perform their task, adapted to new technology, and created new ways to do news in an evolving visual medium. The customs that developed out of trial and error have been passed on to subsequent generations of television journalism and have come to be expected of television news. These have become conventions of local news broadcasting.

Because television provides us with "a continuous stream of images *almost all* of which are deeply familiar in structure and form,"[17] television programming today seems "natural" and "inevitable." But television programs are human constructs, and by no means either natural or inevitable. In today's television news, says Jerry Jacobs, "spectacularly professional, exciting, and meaningful journalism is still taking place out there, thanks to high tech. And a lot of people in the business today have the same standards the industry did 10, 20, 30 years ago. The same type of person who could produce informative *and* entertaining pieces with the Stone Age tools of yesterday knows how to do it equally well with Son of Sputnik today."[18]

The second reason for the lack of studies about early local television news is more practical: it is far easier to focus on network news, which, while formidable, has manageable limits. By contrast, studying the more than 1,000 local stations could be a lifetime undertaking, even if limited to the earliest period. By the time the FCC freeze ended in 1952, there were 108 stations on the air, and that number was growing quickly. One method for studying local news that is both practical and has promise is the case study. A survey study can broadly examine a few characteristics of a number of subjects, but a case study makes it possible to study many characteristics

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in greater depth. This book focuses on Pittsburgh as an example of how local television news was evolving in other cities as well.[19]

A third reason has to do with the scarcity of historical records. It seems that, whatever the subject, the closer one gets to the local scene the scarcer documents become. This is especially true with television. Lacking perhaps both the economic means and a sense of historical importance, local stations tend to "trash" history.[20] In the case of television news, material often existed only during the moment of broadcast, and much of the film from the early days was actually destroyed while being aired. Dave Murray, a pioneer in Pittsburgh television news, told how film laced up on a projector

> often would mess up and you'd see the frozen thing in the gate on the air. Then it would start to smoke and curl, make a mess out of the sprocket holes, tear them all up. People wonder why there aren't any film archives to any great extent around of those early years. Well, it was literally destroyed in the process.

Since most early television stories were done with "voice-over"—read live while the film was shown—reconstruction is impossible without the scripts. Film that comprised the "A-Roll and B-Roll" of double-system packages being composed simultaneously with a broadcast no longer exists as a complete entity, even when the film has been preserved.[21] One study of Pittsburgh television, done in 1965, already was lamenting that written material had been discarded.[22]

But the history of local television news deserves attention, because it is the primary source of news for most of us. Polls since 1963 have shown that television is the primary source of news for a majority of Americans, and in the 1990s it is the only news source for the majority. It is therefore hardly surprising that television is the medium people trust most. In polls asking which medium people would be most inclined to believe given conflicting versions of a news story, television is first—ahead of the second-place newspapers by a margin of nearly three to one. Television is thus both an important source for how the public views reality, and the major source. As Lance Bennett put it, "Mass media news remains our only broadly shared window on reality."[23]

We have learned several things about that "window on reality." First, people don't remember much of what they see and hear on newscasts. At least one study indicates that television viewers learn considerably less from television news than we might presume: despite being inundated with data,

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the public does not recall facts from television news well, largely because of mental inertia and the way the news is reported.[24] Jacques Ellul noted: "Excessive data do not enlighten the reader or the listener; they drown him. He cannot remember them all, or coordinate them, or understand them; if he does not want to risk losing his mind, he will merely draw a general picture from them."[25] That "general picture" is what should concern us, for it provides the context in which opinions are formed and decisions are made.

The "general picture" of reality that we get from television news is not neutral and objective. Even apart from television, our perceptions of the sociopolitical world are filtered through the systems of meaning that are inherent in being human—that is, reality is socially constructed by each of us. We perceive the raw happenings of the world as "events," already shaped into the familiar patterns of our expectations.[26] Beyond this principle, however, is concern for the ways in which television news itself shapes reality for all of us as well. Dan Schiller has called the structure of television news that shapes reality along certain lines an "invisible frame."[27] Television news "is not a neutral body of information," Paul Weaver points out, "but rather information gathered and presented to illustrate certain ways of seeing the world, based on certain values and favorable to certain courses of action."[28] The sociology of the newsroom, the psychology of journalists, the role of economics, and the function of the processes through which news is produced have all been examined in an attempt to answer the question of how television news constructs reality.[29]

Certain things that can influence news, such as the political bias of individual reporters or the pressure of advertisers, can be monitored, but more-subtle influences on how the news is shaped are more powerful because they lie below the threshold of awareness, in assumptions about what it means to do broadcast journalism in a professional way. The stories presented in newscasts are created by the journalist "out of the conventions, procedures, ethos, and devices of his craft."[30] Specifically because they are unconscious—part of the taken-for-granted world of the broadcast journalist—those conventions have a powerful influence on shaping reality. Years ago, broadcasting was synonymous with radio, but when television came on the scene, broadcast conventions were shaped to meet the needs of the visual medium. Thus, the craft of television journalism was not preordained or arrived at through careful deliberation, but rather evolved over time.[31] For this reason, the customs and practices of television news broadcasting over the years can be studied.

Television news shapes reality in a number of ways. First, only a limited

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number of the many events that take place all over the world each day can be included in a newscast. And then, the daily items chosen for coverage are shaped by the formulas of broadcast journalism. The television news that results is a highly selected slice of reality that is shaped in ways that are determined in large part by the conventional ways of doing television news. Each newscast is thus only a "general picture," an interpretation of reality, and certainly not synonymous with reality itself.

That is hardly a novel idea, and it is not unique to television news either. Other forms of journalism share this shaping function. More than fifty years ago Quincy Howe said: "Not only does the news itself affect our daily lives; the reports we get of that news determine our attitude toward the world around us.... In consequence, we are more influenced by the way some event is interpreted than we are by the event itself."[32] Recent studies support Howe's contention that the reality journalism presents is not a simple, objective view of reality untouched by the journalistic process. As James Carey put it: "Journalists speak an invented code."[33] The result is that television today, with its sophisticated technology, throws over the world a news net "woven in such a way as to harvest only some species of fish."[34] That "news net" is woven by the customs and practices of television news that originated in the earliest days of the medium, when broadcast radio news conventions were being shaped to fit television. These conventions, with modifications, have endured to the present.

Television news shapes our view of the world around us by selecting certain events to call to our attention and ignoring others. The decision of which "stories" to select is shaped by a conventional assumption that television news requires pictures. That assumption has enormous consequences, because those choices involve value judgments. As Erik Barnouw put it,

> The very process of selection—where to maintain camera crews, where to dispatch them, what they should shoot, how they should shoot it, who should be shown, who interviewed, what footage should be chosen, how juxtaposed, and what should be said about it—is bound to confer on a few items a huge importance and to relegate other matters, people, places, and problems to a secondary level of reality, and perhaps oblivion.[35]

Broadcast journalists consider these choices to be simply part of the job, one of the conventions of their profession. Said Maury Green:

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> The use or nonuse of every single story in every news broadcast, the time attached to the story, the placement of the story within the broadcast, the style of its presentation, the personality assigned to it—every one of these things must be decided deliberately, and every decision involves a qualitative value judgment. That is what journalism is all about.[36]

The unspoken assumption is that broadcast journalists simply "know" how to make those judgments, that the judgments are made with professional objectivity, and that the "general picture" presented in a newscast is an accurate account of reality—"the way it is," as Walter Cronkite would say at the end of each CBS News broadcast.

Sources of information are as necessary for a news story as pictures. Because television reporters seldom witness events directly, they must depend on statements from news sources in constructing their stories. Sources that television journalists usually look to are known as "official sources." Officials often "know" the kind of information the reporter is looking for, and they also lend authority to the facts. Furthermore, officials are easily accessible—the source of what Phyllis Kaniss calls "convenient video."[37] Some common official sources are press releases and press conferences, police radio scanners, and calls to hospitals. News leads also come from the wire services and newspapers, sources that use regular "news beats." But a news beat, Leon Sigal has pointed out, is "little more than the formal routinizing of period checks with a network of contacts."[38] That network of contacts consists mostly of "official" sources.

Reliance on official sources may make the news appear authoritative, but the result is a newscast that represents an "official" view of the world. News stories reflect "the identities of the people reporters talk to, the places they go, the things they believe, the routines that guide how they work, and the conventions that govern what they write."[39] Even when reporters are eyewitnesses to events, they are encouraged to use "attribution"—that is, to find a news source that will say what the reporter wants said. This motivates reporters to include more than one official "talking head," and it results in stories that appear authoritative but often simply present contradictory opinions with no analysis or resolution.[40]

Janet Steele notes that the ideal of objectivity encourages the use of "academic experts" to give an aura of objectivity and authority, and prevents television journalists from offering their own analysis and interpretation. What it amounts to is that television news producers "decide what the story

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is and how to frame it, and then they work the phones until they find an expert who will see things their way." The "academic experts" are chosen the same way "official sources" are: those who are chosen are centrists—they've made their reputations by staking out intellectual positions that fit into the mainstream."[41] The form of presentation—the use of "official sources" and "academic experts" to make news stories appear authoritative and objective—thus gives the aura of authority and objectivity to the story, but, critics have pointed out, this practice serves only to maintain the status quo.[42]

Another assumption that has a powerful effect on the "general picture" of the world television news presents is the assumption that each news happening is a "story." The newspaper story, with its discursive structure and an impersonal reporter, is quite different from the television story. The narrative form of television news utilizes a highly visible storyteller whose story must have a form of its own: "a clear, continuous narrative line sustained throughout the story—something with a beginning, a middle, and an end that will create, maintain, and if possible increase the viewer's interest."[43] A newspaper story packs important data at the beginning so that it can be trimmed at the end by an editor as space limitations dictate, but a television story is structured like a theatrical play, with the climax at the start. This convention, says Maury Green, is based on the "peripety"—a sudden reversal of fortune. Green cites as an example an automobile accident: the story relates first the details of the accident (where it occurred, the number of people killed, and so on), then the cause of the accident, and then concludes with the effects of the accident (children left orphaned, for example). The structure is climax-cause-effect: "the end of the story 'ties it all up neatly,' leaving no loose ends."[44]

So the television story has a dramatic unity that cannot be arbitrarily cut in the manner of a newspaper story. The dramatic unity imposes its own kind of interpretation on the event from the outset. When a journalist comes to a news happening with a particular form of story in mind, consciously or unconsciously, the aspects of the event that will be included in the broadcast story have to some extent already been determined, because they are perceived through the perceptual grid imposed by the form. Those aspects are then further shaped by the structural demands of the form itself as the story is created.

A television reporter looking for a narrative line can almost always find one. The narrative line of television stories constitutes a theme, which itself imposes an interpretation on reality. Because television stories rely on

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pictures to help tell the story, they are akin to motion picture films, whose essence is drama, producing an emotional response. Green believes the use of film (and videotape, which has replaced film in television news but which involves virtually unchanged cinematic principles) is the main distinction of television news: "In his use of the motion picture the newsman must try to generate the emotional response which corresponds to the *reasoned opinion arrived at by examination of the facts*" (emphasis added).[45] The enormous assumption is that events have an independent existence "out there," that what occurred can be discovered by a reasonable examination of objective facts, and that therefore the journalistic task is simply to discover objective reality and to communicate that reality to television viewers.

But television pictures alone do not tell the story. The conventions of the medium affect the very perception of reality. The narrative or story line is itself a theme, and pictures become the material to illustrate that theme. Decisions about what pictures to take or obtain and how they are taken is not accidental or haphazard. Videographic decisions are influenced by the theme of the story, as are decisions about how to edit the pictures for a newscast. The theme of a news story has a powerful effect on the content of the newscast, endowing it with "a strong preference for personifying and dramatizing, for representing institutions, situations, general developments, and the like, by means of actions, predicaments, moods, or statements of individual people."[46] The result is that television news is more interpretive than a newspaper story.

Television is not simply drama, but *visual* drama, and the need for drama is a major factor in the selection of stories. Some events are reported "because their dramatic or narrative structure makes them obtrusive and, to a storytelling, story writing reporter, irresistible."[47] This is especially true when compelling pictures are available for use in telling the story. Stories with action footage are usually selected over stories with only "talking heads."

Story lines too have a powerful influence on how events in television news are perceived and presented. Even a simple story that has no dramatic action footage—for instance, an interview—is a staged event that is shaped by cinematic considerations. Unlike the human eye, the camera sees what the photographer selects and keeps within the bounds of the frame of the film. For instance, an interview in the field is shot with one camera, first on the subject, then reversed to shoot a repeat of the questions asked by the reporter, then edited to give the impression that the scene was shot with two cameras. This well-established convention is an artifice used to achieve the "reality" accepted by the mind as real. In the words of Green:

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> This world-within-the-frame is unlike anything in human experience. No onlooker, for example, can jump instantly from the position of Camera 1 to that of Camera 2, and back again in the next instant. Yet that is exactly what the onlooker will do when he views the master shot into which the reverse shot is edited. This instantaneous transition from one point of view to another is a convention which we accept because we accept the world-within-the-frame unquestioningly, even if we have never experienced anything like it.[48]

Thus even the simplest television story is a construction of reality.

The conventions of television news, which are indeed a powerful influence in shaping the picture of reality presented, are conservative and slow to change, primarily because television management insists that news be done "professionally" and because schools of communication and journalism reinforce that professionalism. The conventions are considered part of the craft of professional journalism, so television management hires reporters who look, sound, and act "professional"—that is, the way television reporters are expected to look, sound, and act—with the "school of experience" the only school that counts.[49] Even at major universities, professors of broadcast news in schools of journalism usually must have had practical professional experience. Higher education has been criticized for its tacit assumption "that communications and media education undergraduate programs exist primarily to serve the narrowly defined, short-term needs of media industries by producing unquestioning, industry-socialized, job-specific, entry-level, plentiful, cheap labor," thus preserving "professionalism"—uncritically.[50]

The need to hold the audience is another factor that retards the evolution of the conventions of news: viewer expectations must be met. What Joyce Nelson observes about other television genres (for example, crime series and situation comedies) also applies to newscasts; much of what we see on television is formula, "a conventionally structured story with easily recognized character types and widely accepted resolutions."[51] This is the case because it is easier to use a formula than to invent something new and, equally important, because audiences like knowing what to expect and find it difficult constantly to be faced with new types of stories on a regular basis.[52] John Cawelti said that the conventions of writing fiction "establish a common ground between writers and audience." Audiences for television news have learned how to "read" newscasts too, and the conventions of

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television news function to establish no less a common ground between reporter and audience.[53] If popular novels are difficult to "read," people quit buying them; if a newscast is not easy to watch, audiences will change the channel.

Television news organizes our perceptions of the world, beyond or instead of firsthand experience. The conventions of the journalist's craft have come to be accepted both by journalists and by the television audience, not only out of habit but also as a guarantee that news is reported objectively. The result is news that has been selected and constructed in certain ways. Examining why and how these practices developed will help us understand them.

Journalistic pioneers in many cities took the new medium called television seriously. The early years of Pittsburgh's WDTV—later to become KDKA—serves here as a case study, representing stations in other cities where local television news was being developed as well. The story begins with the tremendous economic difficulties of getting a television station in operation. For that, we go back to the time when broadcasting was AM radio, and a monopoly that few expected to be easily broken—immediately after World War II, when television finally emerged from its period of testing to become a commercial medium that would change broadcasting in a profound way. It was a time when cities around the nation were getting their first television station. It was an era of great promise, but the results we take for granted today were anything but obvious then, and there was no shortage of skeptics about what it would cost to make commercial television a successful enterprise. The birth of broadcast television cannot be fully appreciated without an understanding of those times, and not only of the things that have endured but also of some of the attempts to turn the new technologies into profitable enterprises that fell by the wayside. And it is with an account of those times that our story begins.

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1 WDTV Channel 3

Just an Installation to Sell Some Sets

World War II officially ended on September 2, 1945, and one month later the government lifted the ban on building new television stations. Broadcast companies rushed to make application with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for a construction permit, a license to build. The press was filled with optimistic reports that heralded an imminent revolution in broadcasting. Television stations would soon be sending moving pictures to homes, with the sound of the Lone Ranger's "Hi-ho Silver!" making way for the sight of Captain Video and his "Video Rangers." Moreover, FM radio would at last come into its own. The obvious advantages of television, and of FM radio with its superior reception, would likely spell the immediate demise of AM radio—so said the prophets of technology.

But the revolution fizzled into an evolution as AM radio held on far longer than expected. Television took years rather than months to become profitable, and FM radio would not begin to find its niche until nearly thirty years after its inventor, Edwin Armstrong, had introduced it to David

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Sarnoff at RCA. The story of the struggle to convert from radio to television illustrates the profound difference between a technological innovation and a successful business enterprise. It took nearly four years for Pittsburgh to get a television station, and even then the only profit was expected to come from the sale of equipment, not from broadcasting.

The prophecies would eventually be realized, but the story is far more complex than the simple notion that AM radio ruled supreme until television arrived one day and wrote the final chapter of radio's monopoly.[1] The process may have been inexorable, but at the time it did not appear as certain or as predictable as it does in retrospect. Investing in television in those early years was a risky business, as broadcasters searched for the bottom line, and there was an extended struggle to get television started.

Broadcasters in those days were radio broadcasters. The first reason that it was so difficult to launch television was the complete hegemony of radio. It is difficult to exaggerate the degree to which America was devoted to radio. Radio revenue from advertising had risen from $20 million in 1928 to $170 million in 1939, with income increasing every year except 1933, while newspaper advertising revenue had declined by more than one-third during the same period. The radio culture had dominated life in the 1930s and throughout the war years, when even farmers listened to the radio, even though before the war only one out of four farm homes had electricity. In fact, it was not until 1927 that radios could be plugged into an electrical outlet. The first radios were battery-powered—the reason, of course, that so many programs were sponsored by companies that made batteries. The Eveready Hour was one of radio's first important commercial radio programs, sponsored to sell to radio-set users dry-cell Eveready batteries to power their radios. Philco, a prominent name in early radio, was short for the Philadelphia Storage Battery Company.[2] Veteran Pittsburgh newsman Paul Long recalled growing up in rural Texas during the 1930s, when they would take the radio battery outside to hook it up to the car for recharging. Ed Schaughency, another veteran of news in Pittsburgh, recalled one of the first commercials he read on KDKA radio in the 1930s: an ad for Aladdin's kerosene lamps. The combination of radio and kerosene lamp conjures a picture of life in prewar America. Even homes that had no electricity or indoor plumbing had radios.

From the early 1930s to the mid-1940s, radio came to dominate mass culture. Although a few remote parts of the country could not get a signal, the 50,000-watt clear channel stations, such as KDKA, made America a radio culture. Radio was the number-one leisure activity, and the average

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citizen spent more leisure hours listening to the radio than anything else except sleeping. The networks supplied afternoon soap operas and a rich menu of evening fare, and each station supplemented this programming with a variety of local programs. The radio was likely to be in a large wooden cabinet, around which the family gathered for entertainment. Here is one description of a typical evening in pre-television America:

> The family is gathered in the living room. Dad in the rocker. Mother in the armchair, the kids sprawled on the floor in front of the radio. It's 7:00 P.M., time for CBS Radio's "Mystery of the Week." At 7:30, the dial is turned to ABC, and the familiar background music of "The Green Hornet" fills the room. At 8:00, on NBC, a new star, Milton Berle, hosts a variety show. At 8:30, the family has to choose among "The Falcon," "A Date with Judy," or "America's Town Meeting."[3]

Many older citizens today remember that scene well, and at the time it seemed unlikely that it would ever change. According to Erik Barnouw, by 1950 there were more than one hundred similar radio programs that had been on the air for at least a decade, and a dozen that had lasted for two decades or more.[4]

The radio networks felt the impact of television sooner than local radio stations. Network profits reached their highest point in 1948 and declined steadily thereafter. But even the radio networks did not succumb easily. The tenacity with which network programming clung to a place in home listening habits is dramatically illustrated by the final episode of "Ma Perkins," one of four daytime soaps to leave the air on November 25, 1960. At the close of the program, the leading actress, Virginia Payne, said goodbye to all the listeners. Her words convey something of the depth and breadth of America's radio culture: "This is our broadcast number 7,065. I first came here on December 4, 1933. Thank you all for being so loyal to us these twenty-seven years." She listed the actors who had played each character, concluding with: "Ma Perkins has always been played by me, Virginia Payne."[5] That was twelve years after network radio's "last great year."

Local radio was indeed slow to give way to television, and immediately after the war it strengthened its hold on broadcasting in a substantial way. When the war ended in 1945 there were 950 AM stations on the air. The postwar growth was dramatic. Five hundred stations were added in 1946, and some 400 more in 1947, until by the end of 1948 the number of

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stations had doubled and there were more than 1,900 AM stations in operation, producing a record yearly profit of $145 million. So the myth that radio beat a hasty retreat when television appeared on the scene is not supported by the facts.

If there was a race with the newcomers—FM radio and television—AM radio was clearly in the lead. By the beginning of 1949 there were 1,911 AM radio stations to FM's 698 and television's 51. Moreover, even with network radio sales in decline, the number of AM stations continued to grow. By the end of 1949, AM radio had gained 176 stations, for a total of 2,087, while FM and television each gained just 46, for a total of 744 and 97, respectively. But even in the face of AM radio's superior numerical count, some believed that radio's postwar "holiday" was over.[6] Despite pronouncements prophesying decline in the face of competition from FM radio and television, however, local AM radio continued to thrive. Radio was firmly embedded, and uprooting it would not be a simple matter.

In retrospect, there was no reason for economic pessimism in the postwar period. The war ended the Great Depression of the 1930s and pumped money into the economy. The gross national product went from $91 billion in 1939 to $215 billion in 1945, the number of jobs rose from 45 million to 65 million, and per capita income nearly doubled during the war. In the war years, big spending had been considered unpatriotic, and shortages of consumer goods meant there was little to spend money on anyway. So Americans saved to the tune of an estimated $70 billion, and most had never been so well off. The technological production that had contributed to the victory in war was used for peacetime manufacture of a variety of items for Americans to buy with the newfound wealth. It was a time of "American high."[7] Even only a partial litany of the technological innovations between 1945 and 1950 demonstrates the emerging new lifestyle: clock radios, instant cameras, 33⅓ and 45 rpm records, synthetic fabrics, electric clothes dryers, electric blankets, electric carving knives, garbage disposals, automatic dishwashers, deep-freezes, frozen orange juice, beer in cans, prepared cake mixes, tubeless tires, automobile air conditioners, and pieces of plastic called credit cards for buying now and paying later.

This makes it difficult for us to understand how the broadcasters could have been pessimistic about the economic viability of television, why they had genuine doubts about how soon the new medium would challenge the dominance of AM radio. For example, Paul White, director of CBS news operations for thirteen years, said in 1947, "As far as the broadcaster is

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concerned, millions of dollars are going to be lost until a single dollar of profit is made."[8] This conviction proved to be valid, especially for network television. For the three-year period 1948–50, the aggregate loss for networks and individual stations was $48 million, and the four television networks and their fourteen owned and operated stations accounted for $27.5 million of that. Not until 1951 did CBS and NBC turn a profit; the DuMont network was still operating at a loss.[9]

In those days, the accepted wisdom was that "the only profits to be had in commercial television for a number of years were to be made in manufacturing, not broadcasting."[10] This replicated the early days of radio, when there were no thoughts of profits from advertising, and programs were thought of only as ways to attract listeners who would purchase equipment.[11] Thus DuMont opened its television station in Pittsburgh expecting to make a profit by selling television equipment, both for broadcasting and for home reception. Larry Israel, WDTV's first sales manager, confirmed the low expectations for profits from television programming as he recalled a conversation with Dr. DuMont during one of the founder's visits to Pittsburgh. The two were in a hotel lobby watching Pittsburgh's only station, and Dr. DuMont, first and foremost an engineer, repeatedly went to the back of the set to adjust the picture. When Israel mentioned what a good program was on, DuMont was just not interested. "He was very nice," Israel remembered, but DuMont said: "This is just a little experiment, this station in Pittsburgh. We aren't here to make any money." He showed no interest at all in the programming. When Israel replied that they were going to do very well in Pittsburgh, DuMont answered, "This is just an installation so we can sell some television sets."

Not long after, Israel met with local leaders of industry, who also found it difficult to believe that the radio-listening audience would become a television-watching audience and who were therefore reluctant to invest in television advertising. Larry Israel remembered trying to convince these potential advertisers to try television.

> And they said, "Mr. Israel, are you trying to tell us that people will sit home at night and watch this thing hour after hour? You don't seem to realize that we're KDKA radio here. This is people listening to radio." I said, "Yes, I recognize that, but this is a coming thing and people are going to watch these programs." They said, "You mean things like wrestling?" I said, "Well, it'll go beyond this. It'll expand."

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Israel recalled leaving very discouraged because he didn't think he'd convinced anyone.

Longer than might be expected, at least in Pittsburgh, the public's notion that local radio would continue to be dominant held. When Westinghouse bought WDTV and changed the call letters to KDKA in 1955, it sent Richard Pack to Pittsburgh to convince local bankers that the record price of nearly $10 million was a sound investment. Pack said that although he knew little about economics his opinion would carry weight because he'd worked for NBC. "So I went out and had a lovely lunch at the Duquesne Club with a very solid and stolid bank executive who looked and acted and talked like a bank executive should." Pack remembered the executive saying, "That's a high price for a television station," to which Pack responded that it was the biggest bargain in the history of broadcasting. But even as late as 1955 it was anything but certain that local television would become a hugely profitable enterprise.

There were good reasons for the timidity and legitimate doubt on the part of broadcasters and others about whether television could replace radio as a moneymaker. The account of FM radio during this era vividly illustrates the difference between technological practicality and economic viability. The war's end witnessed the first public attention to FM, although during the war years there had been optimistic predictions that FM would "clear up most of the troublesome problems of the present day broadcasting industry" and therefore must be universally adopted in the next two or three years.[12] FM offered several technical advantages over AM: it had a static-free signal that made high-fidelity broadcasting possible; stations could be closer, which meant more stations could be licensed; and a proliferation of stations would provide the diversification that would challenge network control of radio. Charles Siepmann saw FM as "radio's second chance" to provide better programming to the public, noting that most people believed FM would completely replace AM: "Within ten years . . . we shall all have FM receivers and none, or few, will have AM receivers."[13] Optimism was so high that in 1946 the chairman of the FCC predicted that FM would replace AM in just two or three years.[14]

The optimism about FM spurred its initial growth. In May 1940, after what had been a five-year experimental period, the FCC authorized full commercial broadcasting for FM, a strong endorsement for the new medium. Although the outbreak of war halted the development of FM, there were great expectations for the postwar period. FM was "heralded as providing not only considerable economic gain, but also 'radio's second chance' for

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diversity and improvements."[15] FM had barely begun to gain a tenuous foothold, facing keen competition not only from AM radio but also from the nascent medium of television, when an FCC decision to uproot it from existing frequencies and move it to a higher band made current transmitters and receivers obsolete. FM owners, fewer in number and less well established than the vested interests of the competing two media, found it difficult to influence the decision-making process, which was "based heavily upon unstated social and economic factors as well as stated technical considerations."[16]

The FM shift would impede its growth and development for some fifteen years. Nevertheless, by 1947 nearly 1,000 FM stations were licensed. But operators encountered problems in finding an audience and finding ways to finance their operations. Because standard AM receivers could not receive FM without special converters, the audience was severely limited. Then there was the problem of programming and advertising: FM could not attract a large audience without distinctive programs; it could not get the necessary funds to produce programs without advertising, but to attract advertisers it first needed large audiences. Because many FM stations were owned by AM licensees,[17] the problem of programming was solved by duplicating their AM programs, with FM sales being simply a bonus for AM sales. This practice, of course, failed to produce profits for FM. Pessimism about FM soon began to overtake the optimism. By the end of 1948, owners of FM stations were finding it impossible to make a profit, and many were turning their licenses back to the FCC. After just a year of operation, WFMO in New Jersey gave up, citing a lack of time-sales, and when WLOF in Florida decided to expand its AM, it had to drop plans for FM. Other stations followed suit.[18] In 1948 alone, 125 applicants turned back their construction permits, and another 350 did so between 1949 and 1952. Despite its superior technology, FM was finding it difficult to turn a profit.

As a result, other economic models for making FM a moneymaker were sought. "Transit Radio" was an idea to put FM to profitable use by placing receivers in transit systems. Transit Radio Inc. of Cincinnati initiated the service in Covington, Kentucky, on July 10, 1948, by installing 100 sets for the Cincinnati, Newport & Covington Railway.[19] Within a month the St. Louis Public Service Company announced plans to experiment with Transit Radio by installing receivers in twenty buses to pick up music, news, time checks, and weather reports from WXOK-FM. Soon more than 1,000 St. Louis buses and streetcars were equipped, and by the end of the year FM

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radio was also playing in public transportation vehicles in Houston, Wilkes-Barre–Scranton, Huntington, West Virginia, and Worcester, Massachusetts. Within two years, twenty-one transit firms were under contract to local stations, represented by Transit Radio Inc. The system, with its low rates and guaranteed audience, was particularly attractive to small businesses. National sales were reported in excess of $14,000, and it was estimated that by the end of the next year 4,500 vehicles would be radio-equipped. The "music-as-you-ride firm," as it was dubbed, reported that 459 sponsors had used Transit Radio on the fourteen participating stations.[20]

Optimism about Transit Radio was high. "Dynamic" and "here to stay" were terms C. L. Thomas of KXOK in St. Louis, which utilized the system, used to describe it, and he predicted that Transit Radio would make broadcasters "more money than they've ever made in AM radio." Ponder, he said, "the effectiveness of an announcement addressed to women who are en route to department stores, . . . in which these buyers are informed by radio that a sale . . . is being held at such and such a store."[21] By delivering a guaranteed audience that could be counted, without having to rely on the vagaries of rating services, Transit Radio could not fail.

Despite the enthusiasm, Transit Radio faced the insurmountable obstacle of complaints that were louder than the commercials: many people did not like having to hear broadcasts while on public transportation. Committees opposed to Transit Radio were formed, and in 1949 a protest was filed with the Public Utility Commission in the District of Columbia, where 212 buses and streetcars had been equipped with radio. C. L. Thomas's reaction was that although most people who complained were sincere, "where would this nation be today if the disapproval of minor groups had stopped the wheels of progress?"[22]

When the protest failed, the case went to the courts. The district court dismissed a suit in 1950, but an appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals the following year resulted in the finding that Transit Radio was unconstitutional because it deprived passengers of the freedom to read or converse, making them a "captive audience." A volume of negative publicity accompanied the legal process. After a lengthy legal battle, Transit Radio was ruled constitutional by the Supreme Court in 1952.[23] *Broadcasting* magazine commented that the decision opened "a new radio vista": "It sanctions the birth of a new advertising medium. It affords the opportunity to a substantial number of FM broadcasters to earn a return on their investments."[24] By that time, however, the negative publicity had caused advertisers to shy away, and Transit Radio died a quiet death. But the attempt is an

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indication of the doubt that contemporaries held about the profitability of FM radio.

In the postwar period there were similar doubts about television, due mainly to high production costs of the new medium. In 1946 eighty stations withdrew their FCC applications: 37 percent cited the cost of equipment, programming, and production; 27 percent said they were waiting for color television; 12 percent cited the uncertainty of meeting costs; and 5 percent reported the general state of confusion regarding television's status.[25] By the time of the FCC freeze in September 1948, only thirty-seven stations in nineteen cities were broadcasting; another seventy stations had their applications approved and were on the air by the end of the freeze in July 1952. Profits were slow to materialize. Increased markets, with a concomitant growth in audience, were deemed necessary to turn loss into profit, and no one could predict when the freeze would end. The onset of the Korean War in 1950 recalled the halt on broadcasting that the previous war had caused, and strengthened doubts about a quick end to the freeze.

The doubt about whether television could be profitable based on the advertising model of AM radio prompted a variety of ideas for new models. Because the new medium of television was thought to be analogous to motion pictures, where attempts to introduce advertising had failed, some turned to the "box office model" of financing. A number of broadcast experts did not think people would be likely to sit in semi-dark homes and devote the full attention that television was thought to demand, especially if direct sales pitches interrupted the aesthetic mood. Therefore they touted the concept of "theater television": rather than put television in the home, they would put it in movie theaters and make viewers pay to see it. This was the "box office model," which had been employed in the 1930s. By 1948 RCA was negotiating with several movie companies to make this a reality, and a few theaters were experimenting with the concept, but by 1952 there was enough free television in homes to render theater television moribund.[26]

"Phonevision" was another attempt to make television profitable: consumers would pay for programs brought to the home utilizing telephone lines. In 1948 an executive for the Illinois Bell Telephone Company announced that his company was prepared to do the billing for Phonevision, which would provide "a new use of existing facilities without interrupting their normal service," and also increase telephone company revenues.[27] Zenith Radio Corporation, the originator of Phonevision, agreed. Zenith president Eugene F. McDonald Jr. said that the television set of the future would be a dual-purpose receiver that could be connected to the telephone

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line for entertainment by Phonevision: "It will be comparable to today's radio-phonograph combination, which receives both radio broadcasts free and plays records for which you pay."[28] McDonald expected to introduce the receiver in the fall of 1949, but twenty-two years later Zenith had to give up on Phonevision.

As with Transit Radio, Phonevision failed—not because the technology was unavailable,[29] but because of economic and political forces. Phonevision was initially attractive because television production was assumed to be too expensive to be supported by advertising alone, and because television would have to meet the aesthetic standards of the motion picture industry in order to meet the expectations of the public. The model for financing this costly undertaking was to be the movie industry's box office—that is, direct consumer payment. However, Hollywood and the National Association of Broadcasters, both of which perceived Phonevision as a potential economic competitor, opposed the plan.

Economic competitors were able to restrict Zenith both in the business arena and in the political arena. Pressure from vested interests on the FCC and in Congress delayed the introduction of Phonevision and set the terms for its entry into the market. By 1949, with development of Phonevision moving forward, the theater owners pronounced it a menace to their industry.[30] When a Chicago test of Phonevision was announced for the next year, the Television Committee of the Allied States Association of Motion Picture Exhibitors declared Phonevision "the greatest threat to exhibition conceived to date."[31] Spyros K. Skouras, president of Twentieth Century Fox, said his company would not supply movies for Phonevision because it chose instead to advocate "theater television," which would bring viewers to theaters to see "big screen television."[32] Hints of an antitrust action from the U.S. Justice Department caused the major film companies like Twentieth Century Fox to change their minds, but the films they supplied to Phonevision were anything but first-run films.[33]

When Phonevision was tested—notably in Chicago in 1951 and a decade later in Hartford, Connecticut—Zenith had to scale down its testing considerably. The Chicago experiment was limited to ninety days and just 300 homes. The company continued to develop Phonevision, however, and in 1970 the FCC granted approval to Zenith Radio Corporation's Phonevision System. It was, however, too little and too late. Cable television was growing, and the networks were programming movies on a regular basis. After twenty-five years devoted to the development of a viable technology, Zenith closed the door on Phonevision.[34]

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In the search for ways to make television more immediately profitable, Westinghouse had filed in 1944 for FCC licenses to operate a television station in three cities: Boston, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. Even though the company estimated it would cost around $250,000 to equip each station, Westinghouse believed it was important to get into television while the opportunity existed. Then, strangely, Westinghouse canceled its applications for both Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, keeping only Boston, where WBZ-TV began broadcasting in June 1948.

Why did Westinghouse withdraw those applications? WBZ's initial broadcast attests that it was not out of a lack of broadcast tradition. Dr. Edwin Jan Van Etten, who had presided over KDKA radio's broadcast of a worship service from Pittsburgh's Calvary Episcopal Church on January 2, 1921, had moved to Boston, where he appeared on WBZ's inauguration in order to make the explicit connection with Westinghouse and broadcasting. The decision to withdraw was a business decision: Westinghouse wanted to use its financial resources for a concept called "Stratovision."

Stratovision was an idea that was intended to make both FM radio and television immediately profitable. A forerunner of communications satellites, Stratovision bypassed ground relay stations and coaxial cable by using an airplane as a transmitter. If successful, Stratovision would provide coast-to-coast television coverage, making it possible for most of the nation to receive television in a day when such a proposal was but a dream for the future. Before it died a quiet death in 1950, a great deal of time and money went into Stratovision. The Stratovision technology did work, and it had at least two resurrections in the 1960s, in places as disparate as the state of Indiana and the country of Vietnam.

Stratovision was the brainchild of Charles E. "Chili" Nobles, who had gone to work as a radar engineer for the Westinghouse Radio Division in Baltimore after graduating from Texas A&M in 1939. In December 1944, as he was flying from Mexico back to Baltimore, Nobles looked down on the flat Texas countryside and realized that the similarities between radar and television would make it possible to transmit FM radio and television from stratosphere airplanes. Ground transmitters were limited to about 50 miles, but airplane transmission might cover up to 200 miles. Nobles took the idea to Walter Evans, then head of Westinghouse's Radio Division, and the idea was greeted with enthusiasm.[35] In need of assistance from aviation experts, Westinghouse struck a bargain with the Glenn L. Martin Company, also located in Baltimore, and on August 9, 1945, the plans for Stratovision

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were announced at a press conference at the Waldorf Hotel in New York City. Evans spoke of the new technology in glowing terms.

The way the news was reported in the *New York Times* the next day indicates how difficult it was to conceive of a new technology that would shatter the hegemony radio held at the time. "New Radio Concept," proclaimed the headline, with the article boldly predicting that Stratovision might revolutionize the *radio* networks.[36]

Stratovision would simply substitute an airborne transmitter for a ground transmitter. An airplane; with four channels for television and five for FM, would circle the earth at 30,000 feet, relaying signals from the ground. This would have many advantages over the current ground systems. Because both television and FM were limited to line-of-sight, even a transmitter atop a tall building could reach only 50 miles, but Stratovision could reach 211 miles in all directions, and therefore cover an area 422 miles in diameter. One airplane would cover more than 100,000 square miles—an area about the size of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania combined. And bringing a signal from Hollywood to New York under the current system would require about 100 repeaters and was unlikely for several years, but Stratovision could accomplish that in the immediate future with just seven airplanes. Furthermore, just fourteen airplanes flying at strategic points could bring television to the homes of 78 percent of the population, including many rural homes that would probably not receive television for years. At the press conference, Nobles explained that "one kilowatt at 30,000 feet would deliver the same signal as fifty kilowatts on the ground" and added that tubes to furnish one kilowatt were already available, even for high definition color television. (At that time, "high definition" meant a better picture, without "snow" or "ghosts," rather than what we know today as HDTV.) Nobles also said that color television could be placed "on equal footing technically with present black-and-white low-definition television."[37]

Stratovision would also be less costly than ground systems. Each airplane would cost an estimated $1,000 an hour of operation, while ground systems would cost about thirteen times that amount. Even with a second plane flying nearby to ensure continuous service, the cost of Stratovision would be significantly less than any system known at the time, including coaxial cable. A coaxial connection completed between New York and Philadelphia in 1936 could also be used to relay television signals, but its cost of more than $10,000 a mile, and the need for a booster station every few miles, made it expensive.[38] AT&T had proposed coaxial cable at the rate of $40 a mile, per month, for an eight-hour day.[39] Westinghouse Vice-President

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Walter Evans said Stratovision would make existing networks obsolete, and Niles Trammell, president of NBC, said, "If it works, it will be revolutionary." The Glenn Martin Company indicated their satisfaction that the "absolute reliability of airplane broadcasting service is not only possible but is not too difficult to attain."[40] The hopes for Stratovision were theoretically well-founded—all that remained was to see if it worked.

Westinghouse did the testing in four phases. The first phase was limited to testing the theoretical basis; the second phase would involve demonstration of televised events. Phase three was to be a single station, using Stratovision as the transmitter, and the final phase would entail a national network of planes. Phase one began in the fall of 1945 and was completed by late summer of the next year. The Martin Company furnished a Navy bomber, and the engineers donned oxygen masks to make flight tests near Baltimore. Using a 250-watt FM transmitter, the system more than met Nobles's predictions. By September 1946 Stratovision was ready to demonstrate its television capabilities. For phase two, Westinghouse proposed picking up a ground signal from 30,000 feet over New York and rebroadcasting to an area that would stretch from Boston to Washington. By now Westinghouse had a B-29 Superfortress with adequate space for personnel and equipment, plus a pressurized cabin.[41] Talks with NBC sought the network's cooperation, but the talks had failed, evidently because NBC wanted to direct the whole operation, and Westinghouse chose to finance the project alone. This phase lasted two years and produced some excellent results, along with some notable failures.

The actual testing did not begin for two years, but in 1948 Westinghouse began to pile up reports of successful testing. With little publicity, the flights over western Pennsylvania rebroadcast signals from WMAR-TV in Baltimore, WMAL-TV in Washington, and KDKA-FM in Pittsburgh. The transmissions from "airborne station X10A" were frequently identified, and anyone receiving the signals was asked to write in response. The letters that poured in came from such remote areas as Massillon, Ohio; Richmond, Virginia; and Martinsburg, West Virginia. Milton Young, chairman of the Department of Electrical Engineering at the University of Delaware in Newark, wrote: "Listened to your Stratovision broadcast May 10. Definition and signal strength better than those received from WMAR direct; and FM tuner gave excellent reception from KDKA-FM."[42] By June, tests indicated that Stratovision might surpass all Westinghouse's hopes. *Broadcasting* magazine reported on the latest test: "Signals from a B-29 cruising over Pittsburgh Wednesday evening at 25,000 feet were picked up as far away as

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mid-Manhattan, New Jersey, and New England; Port Huron, Mich.; Cleveland, Toledo, Newark, and Findlay, in Ohio; Baltimore and Washington, and Southern Virginia."[43] The television broadcast was a wrestling match from Turner's Arena in Washington, D.C., and the announcer noted that a listener from Cleveland had telephoned the arena to say he was watching.

So far the tests had not mentioned Westinghouse, but the encouraging results prepared the way for Stratovision's public debut, this time with the Westinghouse name prominently displayed. A radio-press party was scheduled to open with lunch at the Biltmore Hotel in New York, after which reporters were to be flown to Chillicothe, Ohio, between Columbus and Cincinnati: "The town was selected as typical of an area beyond the normal range of any metropolitan TV station."[44] Two events were scheduled for broadcast: the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia on June 23, and a Joe Louis–Jersey Joe Walcott fight. When it was discovered that Chillicothe was more rural than anticipated and had only ten party telephone lines, the reporters were transported to Zanesville instead, where telephone service was more efficient.

This first public test of Stratovision went well. Flying over Pittsburgh at 25,000 feet, the B-29 picked up the signal from WMAR in Baltimore, 197 miles away, and rebroadcast it for an hour. Although the fight was rained out, the results were most encouraging, a "heart-warming triumph," said *Broadcasting,* for the engineers "who have endured the tortures of the pioneer in bringing sky-hook television transmission to its new stature." Using a one-kilowatt visual signal, the transmission had demonstrated that a high-flying plane could rebroadcast "with suitable fidelity a visual and sound program over an area more than 300 miles in diameter."[45] The reports from telephone calls to distant points indicated an impressive coverage area: "Buffalo; Johnstown, Lewisburg, and Carlisle in Central Pennsylvania; Cleveland and dozens of other Ohio towns; Olean, N.Y.; Zanesville itself, which had a virtual Stratovision holiday; [and] Baltimore, where a party of 75 was viewing the WMAR-TV signal as rebroadcast from the B-29 cruising in a 10-mile circle over Mt. Pleasant, Pa., 20 miles southeast of Pittsburgh."[46] Stratovision had showed that it could compete in the race for network television with coaxial cable and microwave relay.

The success of phase two impelled Westinghouse to launch phase three: using Stratovision as the transmitter for a single station. In 1947 Westinghouse had reapplied for a construction permit in Pittsburgh, after relinquishing the earlier permit in 1945. On August 13, 1948, it filed a petition with the FCC to allow KDKA-TV to use Stratovision as its transmitter. The studio

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would be located in Pittsburgh, with the transmitter in an airplane flown some thirty miles west of the city at 25,000 feet, using approximately 12.75 kilowatts. Such a transmission would cover about 127,000 square miles and reach more than 12 million people. In its petition to the FCC, Westinghouse reported that, with just eight kilowatts of radiated power, previous tests had produced reports of reception "from 270 towns in 10 states, including the states of Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Ohio, New York, Delaware, and Michigan," adding, "The system is feasible, and it is the only way . . . that many millions of people will ever receive television service."[47]

The September 1948 FCC freeze on new permits put the brakes on Stratovision. Westinghouse continued to be hopeful and to test. The most notable demonstration was a relay of the broadcast of the sixth and final game of the 1948 World Series from Boston. In this case Stratovision encountered considerable interference, partly because of a weak signal from the station it was picking up for relay, and partly because of interference from several ground stations. Ron Kaiser, who would later work in television as an account executive for an advertising firm, remembered watching the game on television as a child. It was the first time he had seen television, and he thought it was the most marvelous thing he had ever seen. Kaiser's description conveys the excitement of that time:

> My father owned a very small shot-and-beer joint in a little coal-mining town. DuMont made a TV set that was probably about eight feet high, covered in red leather, and the screen was about six or twelve inches, and you had this big monstrous piece of equipment. But my Dad just thought this was the greatest thing. He went out and invested every penny he had to put one in the bar. Unfortunately there were no television transmissions—I mean, we had the TV set but there was no programming. And I can remember I stayed home from school . . . because they were going to—I don't know what device they used, but they were going to fly a plane over that was going to help carry the signal. And we would be able to see a ball game. I remember sitting there, I just couldn't believe this whole thing. I couldn't hardly see a thing—I mean, there was so much snow in there it looked like a blizzard. But you could make out the figures, you could see that there were really people inside that little machine. And I'll never forget that, the impact it had on me. I said, "It's going from here."

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Even with the poor transmission, more than 100 reports indicated that viewers in six states and more than fifty cities had watched Cleveland defeat Boston. An additional test in January 1949 included a camera that took pictures from the airplane. Major Carl O. Wyman of the Marine Corps Electronic Warfare Program said he was able to identify "planes, trucks and other objects on the ground," adding that he saw "great possibilities" in Stratovision, possibilities the military would actuate several years later.[48]

More tests were conducted—with mixed results, mainly because of equipment problems. But by June 1949 Westinghouse concluded that the "skyhook transmission system" worked well in the UHF band.[49] This would, of course, vastly expand the number of channels available. Westinghouse executive Walter Evans declared that the technical problems had been solved. "Commercial development awaits public demand for the expanded services offered by airborne broadcasting," he said, "along with application of the idea by the radio industry and provision for spectrum facilities."[50]

Although technical problems may have been solved, political problems remained. Individual stations in smaller markets were afraid that they would be unable to compete with Stratovision, that the system would give Westinghouse a monopoly. While the FCC freeze halted Stratovision, along with the addition of new stations, AT&T continued to work on developing a system to connect the Atlantic Seaboard with the Midwest. So what had seemed so promising in 1945 ended in 1950. Westinghouse declined to spend more money on a system that seemed to be politically doomed by the freeze, by fears of a monopoly, and by the extension of the coaxial cable and microwave relay.

Stratovision did get off the ground in 1961, with a program called "Midwest Program on Airborne Television Instruction" (MPATI), funded by the Ford Foundation from 1961 to 1968. Headquartered at Purdue University in Lafayette, Indiana, MPATI provided televised prerecorded instruction for six hours a day, four days a week, to public schools in Indiana and in parts of Illinois, Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan, and Kentucky. Westinghouse did the electronic work. William Fall, director of operations for the MPATI, recalled that Stratovision creator Chili Nobles himself participated.[51] The system used two DC-6 airplanes, usually on a rotating basis. Each plane was equipped with two Ampex quad tape machines that played back tapes made for the program. Each plane carried a generator and had a specially designed transmitter that broadcast over UHF channels 72 and 76.

William Kroll, director of radio and television services for the University of Indiana, recalled that one reason for discontinuing MPATI was the lack

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of funds: some schools simply could not afford to buy the receiving equipment necessary to participate.[52] James Potter, director of operations and development for the Indiana Higher Education Telecommunications System, said that some had difficulty paying the fees, which were charged in order to make the program self-sustaining.[53] But according to William Fall, the main reason for discontinuation was the FCC decision to force the MPATI to use one of the channels dedicated to education, instead of the two UHF channels it had been using. "Funds just weren't available to research that," Fall said. But he remembered that before the MPATI was discontinued the military had visited to learn how the system worked.

There is evidence that the first military plan to use Stratovision was aborted. Cecil B. Currey reports that Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara ordered Edward Lansdale to find a way for President Kennedy to "talk to the Cuban people on TV." Lansdale "located scientific help from experts across the country, found a Havana television channel that could be overridden by a more powerful beam, located aircraft and airborne TV equipment, and laid in a supply of tapes." But by the time Lansdale was ready the President had changed his mind.[54]

Stratovision was used by the military in Vietnam. "On 7 February 1966, a U.S. Navy Super Constellation (C-121) rolled down the runway of the Saigon airport, climbed to 10,500 feet—reaching a spot about 20 miles southeast of Saigon—and banked into an oval pattern at the slowest possible speed of about 170 miles an hour."[55] In this case an airplane was used to originate programs, not just to relay a signal from the ground or to play tapes. In addition to transmitters and tape machines, there was a small television studio on the plane. "At 7:30 that evening, the first THVN program was broadcast on channel nine, featuring a newscast, May Day parade film, comedy skit, short film showing prospective Vietnamese pilots in training, and a brief introduction by Prime Minister Nguyen Ky and U.S. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge."[56] Half an hour later the transmission switched to channel 11 for a broadcast to American military personnel. Shortly after, the governments of Vietnam and the United States signed an agreement to build a four-station network, which began operation from temporary ground stations by fall, ending a brief but successful use of Stratovision.

Had Stratovision succeeded for Westinghouse, the company would have become a major player along with the networks. But as it happened, the decision to develop Stratovision cost Westinghouse a television station in Pittsburgh. Westinghouse would pay for that mistake when it bought

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WDTV and transformed it into KDKA in 1955, at a cost of nearly $10 million—a record to that date. So it was an accident of history that when television arrived in Pittsburgh it came as a DuMont-owned station rather than a Westinghouse station.

When commercial television came to Pittsburgh at the end of the 1940s, it was amid considerable doubt about its economic viability. At the time, new technologies promised an optimistic future for broadcasting, but there was also skepticism about whether broadcasters could realize a profit, given the high cost of television. Among the notable attempts to make the new technologies profitable were FM broadcasting, Transit Radio, Phonevision, theater television, and Stratovision, and none succeeded. The gap between the wonders of technology and a successful business enterprise was great. Unless there was a way to make money, getting a local television station on the air would not be an attractive investment. In that context DuMont sent one of their salesmen, Donald Stewart, to Pittsburgh in 1948. His assignment was to get a station up and running so DuMont could earn a profit by selling television sets. DuMont's plan was to make money by selling equipment, but to get people to buy television sets, Stewart had to make them consumers of television. For that he needed programs people would want to watch.

So it was that WDTV arrived in Pittsburgh. It began on January 11, 1949, with a lavishly produced special program, then settled into a constant search for daily programs to fill the broadcast schedule. The first regularly scheduled locally produced program broadcast on WDTV, channel 3, was a news program. That too was an accident of history.

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2 "Pitt Parade"

A Five-Minute Movie of Local News

WDTV went on the air in January 1949, but during its first two years of operation it had no television studio. Except for rented business offices downtown, a one-story, flat-roof, red-brick transmitter building in the Perrysville section of the North Hills of Pittsburgh constituted all there was of television station WDTV. Because there were no production facilities, the television programs on WDTV came from outside Pittsburgh to area homes from the transmitter tower that rose 500 feet above the Brashear Reservoir. The two notable exceptions were "Pitt Parade," a locally-produced daily news program entirely on film, which would continue for nearly a decade, and a special live inaugural program that initiated television broadcasting in Pittsburgh.

The inaugural program was broadcast on January 11, 1949. WDTV had tested its signal for several weeks when, at 8:30 on Tuesday evening, the test pattern was replaced with a slide that read: "DuMont Presents—Your Magic Window." The inaugural program was broadcast from 8:30 P.M.

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until 9:30 P.M. as a prelude to a special "Golden Spike" broadcast shared by the four networks and celebrating the link from the East Coast to the Mississippi River. Because WDTV had no studio facilities, DuMont brought its remote truck and the equipment needed for a local production from New York to Pittsburgh. The program was done as a remote from Syria Mosque, a large Gothic auditorium near the University of Pittsburgh, in the Oakland section of the city. On the day before the broadcast, the *Pittsburgh Press* reported that the signal would be relayed from Oakland off the KDKA-FM tower to the WDTV tower, and from there to the few area homes that had an aerial blossoming on the roof. At long last, television had arrived in Pittsburgh.

Some 4,000 people braved the snow to attend the broadcast in person. Because local distributors estimated that 4,000 sets had been sold,[1] the attending audience for Pittsburgh's first television program was about equal to the home audience. The event made headlines, even though most Pittsburghers could only read about it. The potential impact of the new technology became evident when the pastor of a Baptist church in the nearby community of Sewickley rented an airplane the next weekend and dropped 10,000 religious tracts from an airplane "to make war on the secular spirit of our age."[2]

The first program began with a dissolve from the title slide to the stage of the Syria Mosque, where veteran KDKA radio announcer Ed Schaughency, dressed as "Pa Pitt," the traditional symbol of the city, sat at the dial of a television set. The attending audience could look up at the balcony of the auditorium where three television cameras were pointed down at the stage. During his opening remarks, Pa Pitt put on earphones—in reference to KDKA radio's famous first broadcast, then introduced a local singer, Mary Martha Briney, to sing the national anthem. Next John Kane, chairman of the county commissioners, made some remarks, followed by Pittsburgh's mayor, David Lawrence. Dr. Allen DuMont was on hand for a speech and to present a cathode-ray tube to Pa Pitt. The remainder of the program consisted of an on-stage variety program featuring local acts: the Homestead Steel Choir; folk dancers, "The Polish Falcons"; singer and nightclub owner Jackie Heller; the Pittsburgh Savoyards singing a song from *The Mikado;* dancers Helene and Howard; Al Schact, the "Clown Prince of Baseball" (imported for the occasion); and the "Evans Family." Lest anyone miss the significance of the occasion, the script for Pa Pitt's peroration included the instruction to be "serious":

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> We'll all remember tonight. Not only for its gayety [*sic*] and laughter, its thrilling entertainment and exciting moments, but for its significance in our lives. Tonight we are standing on the threshold of a new era, a wondrous future that may well knit the peoples of all the world into one bond of brotherhood. In just a moment or two, you and I will see and hear and participate in a great moment of history. Like the Golden Spike that linked the nation by rail, it's the Golden Triangle of Pittsburgh that symbolizes the ELECTRONIC LINK in the largest television network in history. I'm going to ask all my sons and daughters wherever you may be to clasp the hand of the friend or neighbor beside you—to link your spirit with us as we approach that second of destiny when the nation takes a new stride forward in the HISTORY OF COMMUNICATION.
>
> (CUT CUE:) Oh, oh . . . Time's running out. I'll have to say goodbye. THIS IS PA PITT JOINING DUMONT'S WDTV WITH THE NATION TO FORM THE WORLD'S LARGEST TELEVISION NETWORK!

The locally produced hour was followed by the "Golden Spike" ceremony from 9:30 P.M. until 10:00 P.M., a program shared by the four networks, then an hour-long program in which each network served up a sampling of its fare. CBS led off with Arthur Godfrey, puppeteers, then "Douglas Edwards and the News," for its fifteen-minute segment; DuMont's quarter-hour featured Ted Steele and his orchestra; Milton Berle followed for NBC; and ABC presented a mystery drama, "Stand by for Crime," originating in Chicago. At 11:00 P.M. on the first evening of television in Pittsburgh, WDTV signed off.

The next day, January 12, welcomed the first full day of broadcasting. The day began with a test pattern at 11:00 in the morning, and programming at 12:45 P.M. Not until 10:00 that night did viewers see the first local television news program, "Pitt Parade." Unlike the special inaugural program—a one-time event—Pitt Parade was entirely on film and would be seen daily for nearly a decade.

Although Pitt Parade was a local program, it was produced by an independent production company, not by WDTV. That came about as an accident of circumstance. Bill Beal had written the script for WDTV's special inaugural program. In the weeks before WDTV began to broadcast, he had approached Station Manager Donald Stewart with an idea for a program. Beal was a partner with Morry Fierst in a company called "Packaged

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Programs," which produced such radio features as re-creations of famous events in history. When Beal learned that DuMont had sent Stewart to Pittsburgh to get a television station on the air,[3] he wanted to convince Stewart to let him do a local news program. Determined to see Stewart, who had taken an office in the old Nixon Theater building, he "dogged his steps for about two months," until Stewart finally agreed to see him. Beal wanted Stewart to give him five minutes for a filmed account of local news events at the 10:00 P.M. sign-off. In exchange for Beal's consenting to write the script for WDTV's inaugural program, Stewart agreed. Thus Pitt Parade, a local news program done entirely on film and the only locally produced program that continued on WDTV, was born.

The newsreel concept was not original, for WPIX in New York had been doing a newsreel since 1948, as had other stations.[4] What was unusual was that Pitt Parade was produced by an independent production company instead of by the station itself. The need for programs prompted Stewart to give Beal's Packaged Programs five minutes of time for Pitt Parade. WDTV had no financial stake in the program; the time was simply given in order to get some local programming on the air.[5]

The producers got involved with Pitt Parade to "get connected with television," as Beal put it, and to make money by selling advertising. Bill Beal described it as "brokering the time," a common practice in television advertising at the time. But whereas an advertiser usually bought a time slot from a station, then produced a program to carry the company's message, in the case of Pitt Parade the station gave the time to Packaged Programs without charge in order to get a local program. Beal sold each five-minute program and produced a filmed commercial spot for each sponsor. The charge was $285.50 per program, a figure he simply created as a reasonable estimate of what it would take to make a profit (see Appendix B). Pitt Parade was soon completely sold—"the most amazing thing to me," Beal recalled.

The transmitter equipment made it possible to get programs on the air in two ways. There was a switcher for picking up live programs from the coaxial cable, and there were two movie projectors, along with a slide projector for stills. The only local program WDTV had during this early period, Pitt Parade was done entirely on film and could be laced onto the movie projector. All other programs during this initial period came from somewhere else. Some live network programs were brought from New York or Chicago by coaxial cable. There was no videotape yet—in fact, the station did not get videotape equipment until it moved to a second studio in 1955. Some programs were filmed live in New York with a 16 mm movie camera.

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The film, called a kinescope, was then shipped to local stations. At WDTV an engineer would lace the "kinnie" onto a projector—just like the Pitt Parade film, but the kinescopes had a snowy, inferior quality and were never very satisfactory. Studio programs would not be done directly on film until I Love Lucy, which premiered in October 1951. Some programs were produced directly on film by small, independent production companies in California, and WDTV purchased some of those to fill the program schedule. But as for local programs, Pitt Parade was it.

WDTV's staff announcers did brief news summaries, which were just audio and hardly worthy of the name "television." Broadcast from the transmitter, usually at sign-off, these news summaries consisted of items taken from the news wire and read, "voice-over," while a slide with the title "news" was projected onto the screen. Viewers could not see the reporters reading the news because there were no studio cameras. Thus, the television "newscasts" during this early period were hardly different from radio newscasts, including even the "rip and read" formula. George Eisenhauer recalled, "We just ripped it off and it used to come down in categories and stories, so you'd take the five-minute UP summary and read it cold." There was no attempt to gather news or rewrite the wire copy. With the exception of the weather, everything was ripped and read—"Everything, sports, everything but the weather, and you looked out the window to get that." It was radio on television, without pictures.

Pitt Parade was all pictures. Photographers took 16 mm cameras around town to record various events. After the film was developed, it was edited by splicing it together, a script was written, and the edited film was taken to the transmitter, where an engineer would lace the film onto a projector. While the film played, an announcer would narrate with the script, to match the film. It was a primitive means of television production, but the only means available without a studio. Bob Battenfelter, who moved from radio to start his forty-year career in television at WDTV in 1950, was hired initially as an "audio man." His recollections of getting programs on the air from the transmitter indicate the early "state of the art":

> We had an audio console and a video chain for a film and a small little switcher. And right beside it there were two projectors, film projectors, and behind the video man was a slide projector, and believe it or not, he rode the video levels with a rear-view mirror like you have on a car. Because he had to sit this way and look at the film chain, when they'd change the slides—and the slides were way

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> back here—he'd reach over and look at the slides that were in a rack behind him. There wasn't enough room. As audio man I had one turntable and a little wee old radio console, because nobody knew anything about television. In other words, we were inventing it as it was going along.

Television technology in those days was primitive.

The method of producing Pitt Parade in the field was as primitive as the technology. Beal, who had some experience making industrial films for a company called Mode-Art, rented a 16 mm Keystone camera and was cameraman for the first program. Getting the film to television was hectic. After the film was shot, it went to a commercial laboratory for processing. (When that soon proved to be too cumbersome, the company constructed its own hand-cranked processor.) Beal's description of the process, even forty years later, was vivid:

> We shot the thing. We developed our own processing drum, so we processed the film for the episode we were shooting, and edited it up, wrote the script, drove out to the transmitter on the North Side, and I did the narration.

In the winter a Jeep would meet the announcer at the bottom of the hill to take him up through the snow to the transmitter. While the film was run on a projector, the announcer kept one eye on a monitor while reading "voice-over" as the film was shown. Dan Mallinger, an early announcer for Pitt Parade, remembered the film would constantly break, at which points the narrator had to ad-lib until the film could be "laced up" in order to continue. Through constant practice, the projectionist learned to splice the film together in ten or fifteen seconds. Jack Mitchell, an engineer and the sixth person WDTV hired, remembered that the announcer sat in the kitchen built for the engineers, who would spend long hours at the isolated transmitter:

> That was our announce booth at the transmitter. There was just a microphone on a little table in the kitchen, and we'd have to be very quiet. There was a black-and-white television monitor, a ten-inch monitor. Every splice broke. It would go to a slide: "WDTV. Please stand by."

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George Eisenhauer, a staff announcer for WDTV, sometimes filled in when the "voice" of Pitt Parade was unable to make it to the transmitter. The film and script arrived so late that Eisenhauer said he often had to "cold-read" the script at the transmitter:

> The first day I did it I was nervous and, gosh, because here was ten minutes of live copy that I had to read, and I got it about three minutes before air time. I got through the program beautifully. Didn't make one fluff, did every story beautifully. At the end of the story, I looked down at the script and I said, "That's Pitt Parade—this is Bill Beal." One of my first embarrassments. I've had many since.

Primitive though the process was, the local production was popular. Pitt Parade was soon expanded to ten minutes, and by 1950 it had been moved to 7:45 P.M., as the lead-in to prime time. The staff increased as the scramble to shoot film and get it on the air five nights a week continued. (There was also a late-night, 12:50 A.M., edition on Saturdays.) Although Beal had some experience with film, the cameramen hired in the early days of Pitt Parade learned as they went along. Young men in the postwar era looking for jobs had no models for what they were doing because television was so new. They perfected their craft by trial and error, learning from practice and from one another. The things they learned and the practices they developed through experimentation became conventions that were incorporated into local television news in Pittsburgh. When WDTV hired the first full-time photographer for its studio-based newscasts, they turned to a cameraman from Pitt Parade. When WTAE launched a news program on its newly acquired station in 1958, three of the cameramen who had learned their craft from Pitt Parade were on their staff: Charlie McGrath, Fred DeFiore, and Jay Gould.

Before coming to Pittsburgh to go to school, Charlie McGrath had been continuity director for a West Virginia radio station. In need of a job, he was hired by the small company that processed film for Pitt Parade, using an army-surplus processor. With that connection, he soon began shooting film for Packaged Programs, even though he knew virtually nothing about photography or about news. McGrath recalled an early assignment to take pictures of the mayor: He had to ask press photographers which one was the mayor. He learned his craft on the job.

Fred DeFiore took a course in writing for radio and television at a local

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college. His instructor told him about a job opening at Packaged Programs, where he was hired originally to help move equipment to a new location but stayed to become a cameraman. DeFiore remembered loading his film backward on his first assignment. He too learned on the job. Both McGrath and DeFiore were still working in television news in Pittsburgh when the 1980s ended.

Jay Gould was a radio announcer in nearby McKeesport when he went to apply for a similar position with Pitt Parade. They did not need an announcer, but they did need another photographer. Gould also learned on the job, confessing that he didn't know the difference between a Brownie and a Kodak when he started. "We'll teach you," the owners told him. He soon developed an interest in editing and became the primary editor for Pitt Parade. As the 1980s ended, Gould was a tape editor for WTAE-TV in Pittsburgh, working with McGrath and DeFiore, who were nearing the end of long careers in local television news.

A fourth photographer for Pitt Parade, Charles Boyle, came to his job with some previous training. The Air Force had sent him to photography school, where he said he learned to "build a story." His memories of his career as a cameraman for Pitt Parade include having a police radio in his car and running from story to story for fifty cents an hour. But Boyle too said he'd learned on the job, as the cameramen learned through mutual criticism. "Somebody would say to you, 'Oh, that was nice, but where were we? You never established where we are. And who's talking? Let me see who's talking.' And we see the close-up." A dramatic story Boyle shot from atop a bridge led to a job with WDTV news and later to a position with NBC.

The men who took the pictures for Pitt Parade learned their craft as they went along. "You taught yourself very basic procedure, which is called long-shot, medium-shot, and close-up," said Charlie McGrath. Jay Gould recalled:

> Like most people, before I got into the business, as a very young man, if I watched a news show, a newsreel in a theater, I just accepted it, took for granted that's the way it is. And when I started shooting it and editing it, I realized what those people had to go through to get their stories. It was a lot more than just pointing a camera.

After they began working, their long hours left them little time to observe how others did it, but they did find occasions to watch movie newsreels and

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network news, and even to work for those sources occasionally as stringers. When the Pitt Parade photographers saw a new technique, they learned to master it. Said Gould: "I went out and did it the next day. I always overdid something I learned until I got it down pat, and then I'd stick it in once in awhile." But mostly it was trial and error, a "matter of osmosis," as he described it. The process of mutual diffusion brought the conventions of television journalism to Pittsburgh.

At least initially, the model for Pitt Parade was the motion picture newsreel, "a ten-minute potpourri of motion picture news footage released twice a week to motion picture theatres throughout the country."[6] The newsreel flourished throughout the 1930s and 1940s but began to fade in the 1950s. Because it was "often shallow, trivial, and even fraudulent," it earned the opprobrium of journalists.[7] The content of the newsreel was the sensational and the offbeat, and events were sometimes staged for the camera, but controversial stories were avoided. And because theater owners did not want controversy to invade their entertainment medium, many refused to show footage bearing on social and political issues. Although Pitt Parade focused on legitimate news stories, it adopted many of the forms of the motion picture newsreel. The structure of Pitt Parade was quite different from the established form of radio news, which organized its stories by category, such as international, national, features, sports, and weather. Instead, partly because it could only do stories that it had film for, it had the "fragmented, sometimes incoherent structure" of the newsreel, "patterned after that of the newspaper."[8]

For the most part, the form of Pitt Parade was set during its first year. The programs consisted of spot news and feature stories. When it made its debut on January 12, 1949, the first full day of broadcasting on WDTV, the script for the program began: "This is Bill Beal introducing the Pittsburgh scene, presented by the Fulton Theatre." The first story was about "one of this winter's rare snows," with pictures of the hazardous driving conditions, including an automobile accident. The narration was done in a direct and highly personal manner, and the wording makes it easy to picture the visuals:

> Fortunately there was no serious damage to life and limb, but those shiny limousines really took a beating. Take a good look at some crumbled fenders, and imagine the ruffled tempers for yourself. The officers of the law were on hand to take down those inevitable names and addresses and numbers. If you were driving downtown

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> this morning on the Boulevard of the Allies, maybe YOU saw this scene, and thanked your lucky stars that you weren't involved. It was really and truly a mess.[9]

Then, somewhat self-consciously, in awe of the new medium's speed in bringing pictures to the public, the script added: "Remember, this happened this morning in Pittsburgh." The only other story on that first Pitt Parade was about the premier of television, with pictures of the special inaugural program, Window on the World, and an explanation of how it had been broadcast live the night before and the way the video signal was brought to Pittsburgh homes from the location at the Syria Mosque.

Occasionally an entire program was devoted to a single story. In September of its first year, for example, Pitt Parade spent two days on the major events of the Allegheny County Fair. The first day showed many features of the fair, with a musical background to the narration. The music, played on phonographs from the transmitter as background for the narration, included an eclectic selection. The music list suggests a rather complex production. The theme music was "American Aerial Triumph," and other selections included "The Arkansas Traveler," "Clear Track Polka," "Turkey in the Straw," "My Old Kentucky Home," "Chimes of Liberty," "Flying High," "Children's March," "Cheribiribin," "Tell Me Pretty Maiden," "Skip to My Lou," and "Valse Lucille." The next day offered a similar production, again complete with music.

During the first year, the producers continued to experiment with the format of Pitt Parade. On the second day of broadcast a brief weather forecast was included. A weather story had been used on the first broadcast, but as a legitimate news story, and such weather-related stories were used from time to time. But from day two a weather forecast was added near the end of the program as a standard feature: "And now the weather, for tomorrow, some cloudiness and slightly milder in the afternoon. Low tonight 35."[10] Because even a brief weather report is not typical of the motion picture newsreel, it is an indication that the producers of Pitt Parade were being influenced by radio news and not committed solely to the newsreel form. Before the first month of broadcasts had ended, a standard closing had developed, a closing that would stay until the program ended a decade later: "This is Bill Beal saying *cheerio on video* and inviting you to be on hand tomorrow night for another edition of Pitt Parade with news sources by the Pittsburgh Post Gazette. G'night."[11] The producers of Pitt Parade were experimenting with forms for a new medium. After about a

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year, the form of Pitt Parade that was to last for its decade run was established. Once television forms are developed they tend to endure.

Pitt Parade was soon expanded to ten minutes a day, six days a week, and lasted nearly ten years, so its popularity is well established. But to what extent was Pitt Parade doing news? And should it really be considered a news program? The evidence—oral history interviews with people contemporary with Pitt Parade, some written material that indicates the thinking of Pitt Parade producers at the time, and, most significant, actual scripts of the programs—is mixed. It is important to remember, though, that memories are skewed when viewed through the prism of the present. Our recollection of an event today may be quite different from the way we saw it at the time it occurred. In the same way, what we consider today to be "hard news" could be different from what Pitt Parade contemporaries considered "hard news."

So we need to establish a standard for what it meant to "do news" at the time. Such a measure can be found in the way Pittsburgh's two newspapers covered or failed to cover the stories of Pitt Parade. During Pitt Parade's first week, the *Pittsburgh Press* called it "a five-minute movie of local news,"[12] no doubt with the theater newsreel in mind, but this description reveals little about its value as a program. Oral history testimony is equally ambiguous. Larry Israel agreed with the newspaper's assessment: "It was, in effect, newsreel." Richard Dreyfuss said Pitt Parade was "the only news program we had," and Eleanor Schano agreed. But others were left with the impression that if Pitt Parade was news it was not "hard news." According to David Murray, "It was, at the beginning, pretty light-weight stuff." Jim Snyder, a news writer with KDKA in those early days, put it in stronger terms:

> [Pitt Parade] was the original quick-and-dirty news program. I think they had one cameraman, or something like that. And they ran around and shot anything they could shoot, and then they'd put it all together and— It was sort of a newsreel, they were just collecting things. They didn't have a lead story. You couldn't count on them having footage on what was a major breaking event of the day. They would go cover bar mitzvahs and ribbon-cuttings and whatever. It didn't have any real shape of what was later to become a television newscast. They didn't give you any sports or weather. It was all voice-over, and they just strung it all together.

However, Snyder left Pittsburgh in 1950, so perhaps he was recalling the first, formative year.

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The memories recorded through oral history are looking back from the perspective of today, labeling the stories "light-weight stuff" compared with today's newscasts and newspapers. A mid-1953 article in Pittsburgh's *TV Guide and Digest* provides information about what the producers of Pitt Parade said they were trying to do.[13] Beneath the obvious boosterism of the article, one can detect the growing sophistication of the program, both in the process of getting the program together and in an understanding of the program's purpose. It continued in newsreel form, with eight to ten stories each day done entirely on film and the narration done voice-over by an announcer who never appeared on camera. So the form of the program had been established and would remain.

Bill Beal had departed from Packaged Programs in 1952, leaving Pitt Parade to his former partner, Morry Fierst. Before joining Beal in 1946, Fierst had been co-founder of the Pittsburgh Playhouse, a local theater company that had given future actors such as Shirley Jones a start; he had also worked for MGM in California for a time. His theater background helped Fierst understand the importance of appealing to an audience, but he was determined to do the kind of news that had characterized Pitt Parade from the start. He told *TV Guide and Digest* that he distinguished between spot news, which he described as stories that appear on the front page of the newspaper, and feature news, or stories that had no immediacy. "A spot news event must always take precedence over a feature."[14]

Fierst cited three news sources: "the police and fire departments, unsolicited requests from the general public, and news tips from friends." (The *Post-Gazette,* acknowledged as a news source in Pitt Parade's credits, was such an obvious source that Fierst probably did not see any need to mention it.) One goal for the program was variety, and to ensure variety Fierst established themes or categories that helped determine which stories to cover—for example, Education, The Great Outdoors, Local Color, The Triangle Story (Pittsburgh's "Golden Triangle"), and Sportscene. There were undoubtedly additional categories, but they have faded in memory. The themes helped in both organizing and selecting stories, and the staff actively looked for stories for each category.

One likely news source was the program's sponsors, but Fierst stoutly denied that sponsors had anything to do with Pitt Parade. In late 1950, after the studio had been built, advertising agencies bought time on WDTV and produced evening newscasts to fill the slot. The advertising agencies completely controlled both the content and the production of their newscasts. Pitt Parade remained fiercely independent, according to Fierst. By 1953 there

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were two alternating sponsors, but, "Fierst is proud of the fact that there has never been the slightest sponsor interference with either the content or the technical operation of the show."[15]

After four years the technology for producing Pitt Parade was more modern. The film was no longer taken to a local lab for processing or run through a hand-built processor. Pitt Parade was "turned out by a fully-equipped organization that takes, develops, prints, and edits every foot of its own film."[16] Now automatic developers and printers made it possible for the staff to get the film "out of the soup" and ready for editing in only half an hour. Even with the accelerated process, there was an absolute deadline of 5:00 P.M., which allowed an hour and forty-five minutes to edit the film, write the narration, and get the film threaded onto a projector for broadcast. Today it is popular to contrast the speed of electronic news-gathering with the dinosaur days of film, but the process is only marginally faster than in the days of Pitt Parade. For the time, it was a remarkably sophisticated process.

George Eisenhauer, who began his career in television in 1949 as WDTV's first announcer and retired from KDKA some forty years later, agreed that Pitt Parade was considered a newsreel that focused more on social events than on news. This is attributable, at least in part, to the way "news" was conceived of at the time. "News" was radio news, featuring an announcer reading stories, especially stories with a national or international emphasis. Traditional news programs had a uniform structure consisting of news, sports, and weather, and stories were often prefaced with a dateline. Early studio-based news on WDTV adopted that format, with an announcer reading "rip and read" copy over a slide that labeled it as news. So, if judged by the definition of "news" at the time, Pitt Parade was not a news program. Local news was not prominent then, as it is today, and therefore people were not as familiar with local stories, because "news" tended to be equated with reports of national and international events.

In 1990 Eisenhauer said he had never thought of Pitt Parade as a news program until recently. Asked how people would have described the program during its existence, he said, "They would probably have said it's ten minutes of television time. I mean, I'm being facetious, but that's probably exactly what they would say. Pitt Parade was not perceived as a news program." But looking back in the perspective of forty years later, Eisenhauer stated: "It *was* a news program. I mean, in hindsight it was a news program. They did some hard news." Oral history and the written record support that conclusion.

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The producers of Pitt Parade, in an effort to conceptualize what they were about, struggled with story content. Bill Beal recalled intense discussions with his partner Morry Fierst about what stories to include:

> It was a mad scramble over what to cover. That was the big philosophical argument that went on between Morry and myself. I wanted to keep it more current news no matter what it was, and he felt it had to be leavened with a certain number of community aspects that would get response. It sort of had a balance.

Even the working title of the program indicates the intention to do news. Beal said they had started out calling it "Eye Witness News" but heard that a station in New York had already chosen that name. "So we had to drop 'Eye Witness News' and came up with 'Pitt Parade.' " But clearly the intent was to produce a news program. Because the complete scripts for Pitt Parade are available, it is possible to test the assumption that it did not do news by comparing those scripts with newspaper accounts of the same stories.

The types of items covered provide evidence that Pitt Parade was indeed doing news. Lead stories for the first month—housing construction, labor leaders sworn in (Pittsburgh was a labor town), the Man of the Year for 1948, the decision by the Pittsburgh Pirates not to allow baseball games to be televised, an auto fatality, a neighborhood march to City Hall to demand increased police protection, a river flood downtown, and winter weather, including the deadline for auto inspections—indicate an interest in reporting current news, stories that can properly be called "hard news." By the start of the second week, Pitt Parade was acknowledging the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* the local morning paper, as a "news source," so it is not surprising that many of the same stories also appeared in local newspapers. But a survey of how the newspapers covered those stories, where they were placed in the newspaper, and whether they included pictures indicates that the stories were conceived as "hard news stories" by contemporary newspaper journalists.

On January 2, 1950, as Pitt Parade began its second year, the script showed a strong hard-news orientation. The lead story that day was the Westmoreland Country Club fire. The morning paper, the *Post-Gazette,* placed the story on the front page with an eight-column headline and pictures, and the evening paper, the *Press,* also put the story on the front page with pictures. The second story that day was the swearing-in of the city

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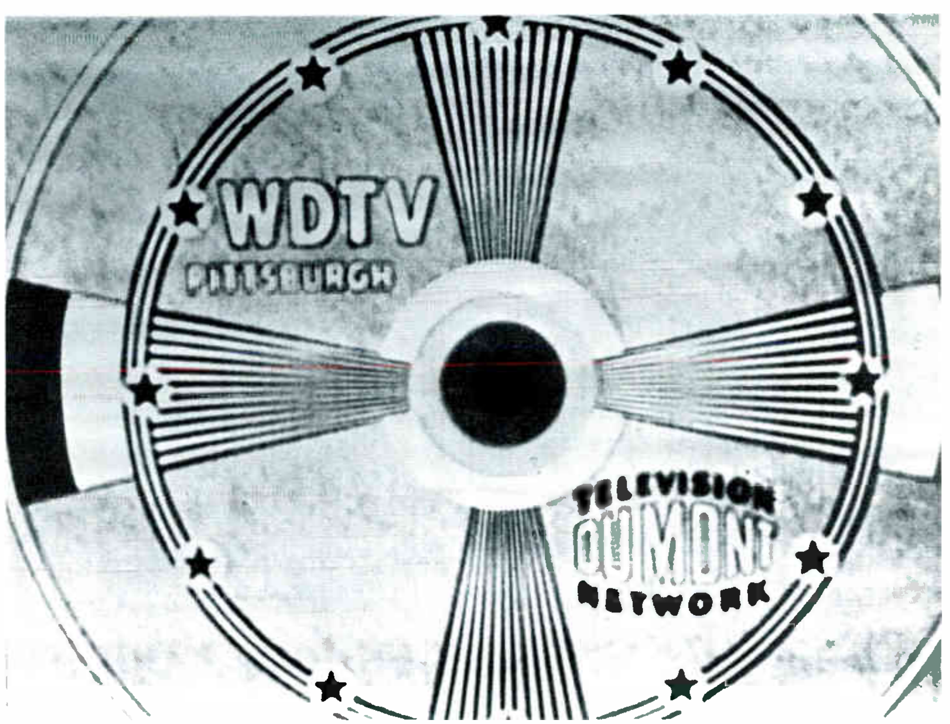

KDKA's predecessor, WDTV, went on the air on January 11, 1949. WDTV's test pattern, shown here, filled the screen before each day of programming.

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A typical scene from pre-television days as two women listened to their Aeriola Jr. Because radio was a dominating presence in American culture during the 1930s and 1940s, investing in television was considered a risky venture. (Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh)

The broadcast tradition in Pittsburgh began when KDKA radio went on the air with the results of the Harding-Cox election on November 2, 1920. Broadcasting election results was one way in which radio revolutionized news reporting. (Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh)

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KDKA radio established many "firsts" in Pittsburgh. Here three-time presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan is heard on remote broadcast. (Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh)

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Mayor (later Governor) David Lawrence speaks on KDKA radio, circa 1946. Lawrence presided over the "Renaissance" that saw a new Pittsburgh rise from the old "Smoky City" image during the post-World War II years when television was starting. (Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh)

Downtown Pittsburgh during the Saint Patrick's Day flood of 1936. KDKA radio was the only station in town to remain on the air. Live coverage of local events was increasingly a feature of radio broadcasting. (Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh)

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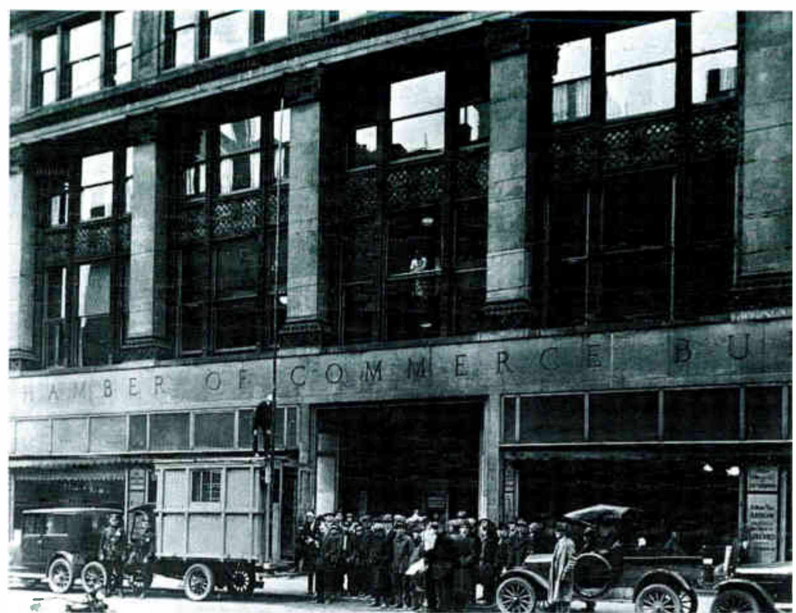

WDTV opened its first studio in the Chamber of Commerce Building in November 1950, which made it possible for the station to make and broadcast its own programs. Here a mobile radio unit sits outside. (Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh)

A 1955 advertisement in the *Pittsburgh Press* for Crosley television sets, featuring Bill Burns. As with radio, more money was made in the early years of commercial television from selling equipment than from broadcasting.

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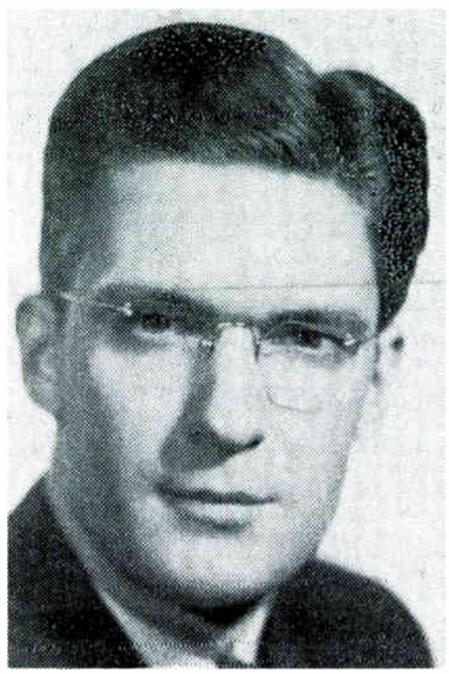

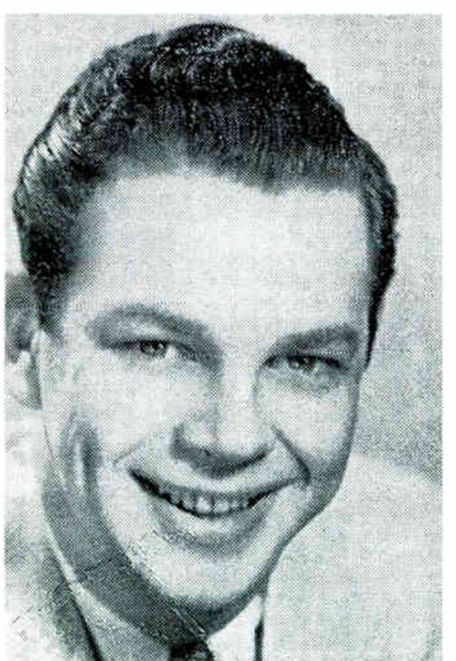

Three from early Pittsburgh news broadcasting. *Top left:* Bill Beal, who started "Pitt Parade." *Bottom left:* Bill Hinds, who moved from KDKA radio to television. *Top right:* Dave Garroway, who went from KDKA radio to Chicago and then to New York as first host of "The Today Show." (Courtesy, Bill Beal)

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Dave Murray, WDTV's first news director and anchor, on the set of "The World Tonight." (Courtesy, Dave Murray)

"The World Tonight," sponsored by the Fort Pitt Brewing Company, aired for the first time on August 11, 1952. The fifteen-minute news and sports show was a significant step forward from WDTV's earlier five-minute "rip and read" news summary. Dave Murray delivered the news, and Ray Scott did the sports. (Courtesy, Dave Murray)

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Like many women who wanted to be in television, Eleanor Schano worked her way into the business as a model for television commercials. In the beginning, she stood before the camera while someone offscreen read the script, but soon Schano convinced the ad agency to allow her to do her own narration. (Courtesy, E. Schano)

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After a brief stint with a show entitled "The Beauty Spot," Schano became WDTV's "weather lady." The weather segment followed a commercial break on "The World Tonight." In 1958 (the year of this photograph), Schano moved on to rival station WTAE, where she also reported the weather. (Courtesy, E. Schano)

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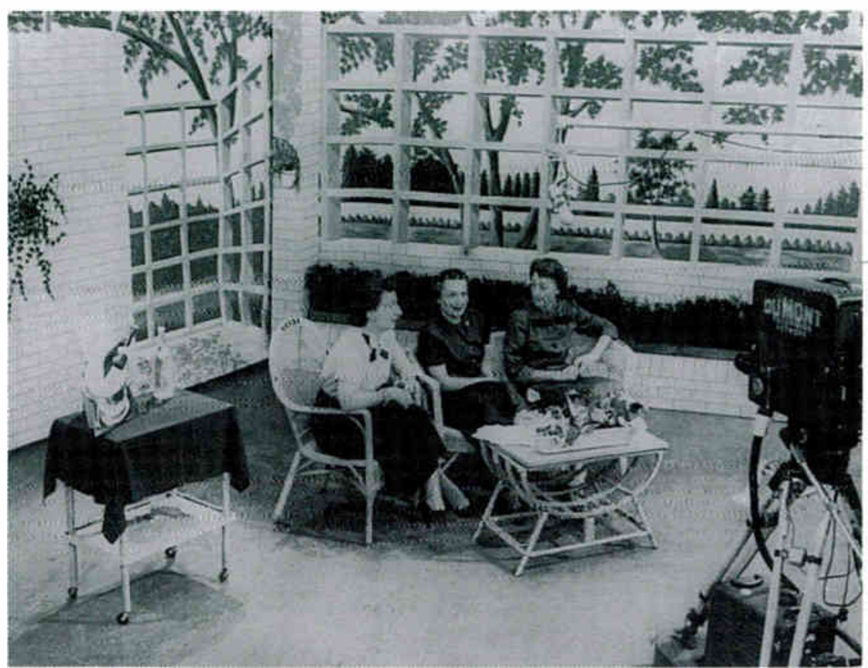

Florence Sando's "Ask the Girls." This daytime talk show for women began in 1952 as WDTV sought to expand its local programming. *Top:* Sando and her co-hosts, Helen Rauh (center) and Dorothy Randall (right), on the set. *Bottom:* advertisement from WDTV brochure. (Courtesy, Florence Sando Manson)

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In a day when few stations allowed women to do "hard news," Florence Sando was in charge of her own morning news program for WDTV. "Woman's Angle" aired from 1954 to 1956. *Top:* Sando in the WDTV newsroom in 1955. *Bottom:* advertisement from a WDTV brochure. (Courtesy, Florence Sando Manson)

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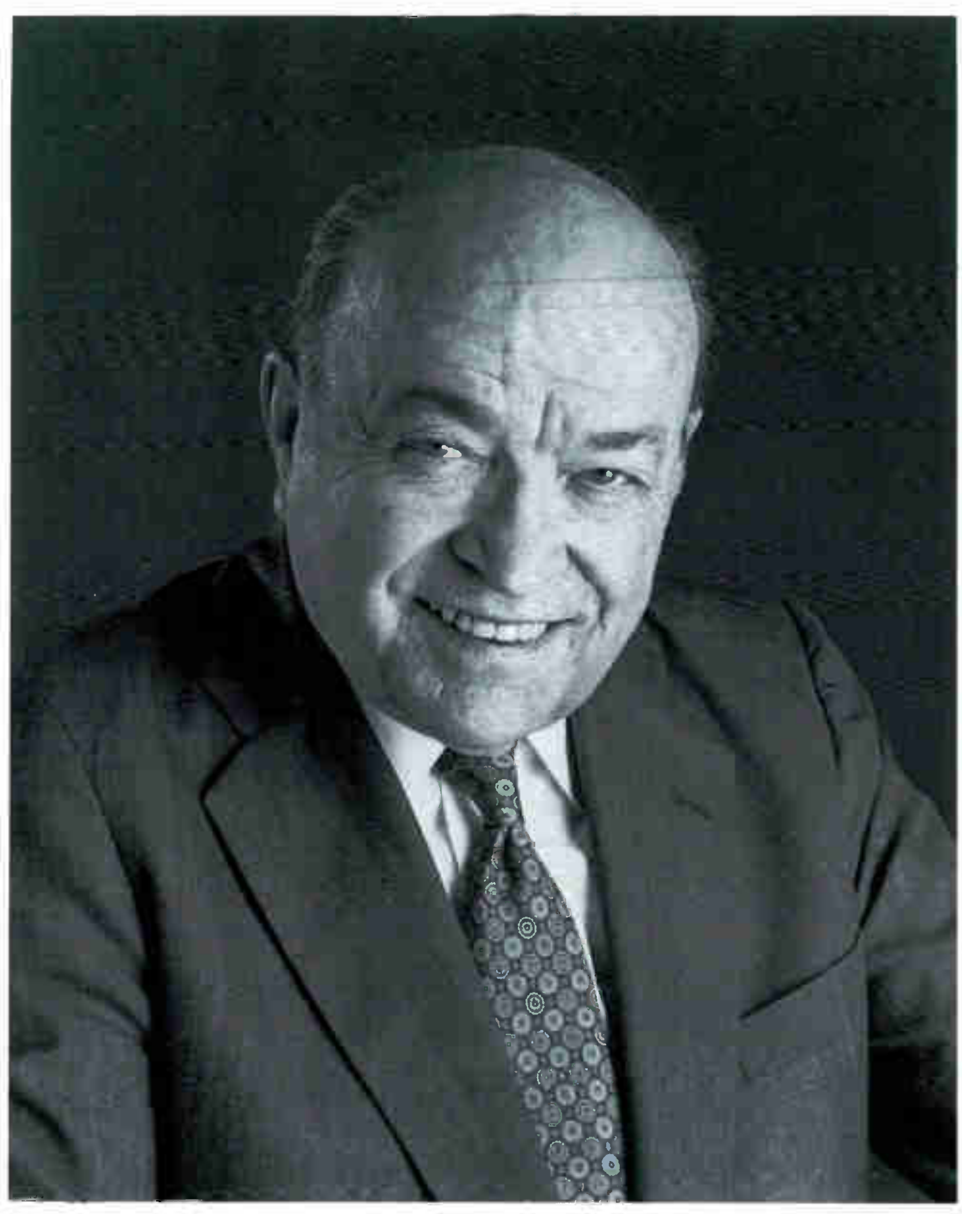

Paul Long, a veteran of both radio and television news broadcasting in Pittsburgh. Long was one of a number of announcers who began in radio and moved on to television. (Courtesy, Paul Long)

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Al McDowell, on the air. McDowell started at WEDO radio in McKeesport, moved to KDKA radio, and then to KDKA television. (Courtesy, Al McDowell)

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A young Bill Burns reporting the news for KQV radio. Burns, who began his career in radio, developed a reputation for actively seeking news to report, rather than relying on newspapers and wire services. When Dave Murray left "The World Tonight" in 1953, Burns brought his aggressive news-gathering style of broadcast journalism to WDTV. (Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh)

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Herb Morrison, veteran Pittsburgh news broadcaster. Morrison is best known for his dramatic live radio account of the fiery crash of the *Hindenburg* in 1937.

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In 1954 DuMont moved WDTV's studio to the new Gateway One building in Point Park. Three months later the station was sold to Westinghouse and the call letters were changed to KDKA. As old buildings were demolished to make room for the new, KDKA grew alongside Pittsburgh's renaissance. (Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh)

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council, also a front-page story in the *Post-Gazette,* while the *Press* placed the story in the second section with two photos. The swearing-in of Mayor Lawrence was the third story, with each paper placing the story on the front page or in the second section, respectively. The final story in Pitt Parade, a feature about a "doll tea party" at a local department store, was ignored by both newspapers, an indication that film made the story attractive only to television.

The practice of covering lead stories and ending with a lighter feature story was established early in local television news. The scripts for Pitt Parade throughout its decade of broadcasting indicate a similar treatment. The majority of the stories were also covered prominently by both papers, but many features were unique to the television program. Feature stories were gradually increased as spot-news stories decreased. Such features included fashion shows, dog shows, spelling bees, various sports, and parades, all of which lent themselves to video coverage.

A sampling of Pitt Parade scripts for ensuing years indicates attention to hard-news stories as well as to lighter features. On January 4, 1951, at the beginning of the third year, Pitt Parade included four stories. The lead was about a barge adrift on the Ohio River; the *Press* carried the story the same evening in section one, page two—a two-column account with a picture. The second story dealt with a walkout at the telephone company; both papers carried the story the same day, the *Post-Gazette* in section two, page thirteen, and the *Press* on the front page with a two-column headline and three pictures on page eight. The third story was about a flood on Pine Creek; again both papers carried the story on the same day, the *Post-Gazette* on the front page with a two-column headline, the *Press* on page two. The final story, about a new restaurant law, had been in both papers the previous day; the *Post-Gazette* gave it a six-column headline on the front page, the *Press* had a two-column headline on page two. One can only speculate on whether the papers were the source of Pitt Parade's stories, but clearly the local papers regarded all the stories as important news stories.

A year later, January 3, 1952, Pitt Parade had six stories. The swearing-in of local resident Michael Musmanno as a Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice was carried by both papers, with the *Press* account run the same day on the front page, the *Post-Gazette* the next day on page seventeen with photo. The second story was about a restaurant robbery, covered by the *Press* on page nineteen the previous day. The third story was about the three rivers cresting just under flood stage. Both papers placed the story on

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the front page. Ice floe on the rivers followed, with the *Post-Gazette* giving the story front-page treatment. The fifth story focused on a reportedly wealthy recluse who had died on Christmas Day; the *Post-Gazette* put the story on page two. The last story was an account of a hockey game by the Hornets, the local professional team, carried by both papers on the sports page.

The narration was still done in the personal style of the motion picture newsreel, with special attention to telling the audience what they were seeing. As with broadcast scripts even today, little attention was paid to correct spelling, for the words are meant to be heard rather than read. Names with difficult pronunciations were written in the broadcast version of phonetics. The script for the first story, written entirely in capital letters for easy reading, illustrates:

> THESE SHOTS WERE TAKEN IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE SWEARING IN OF JUDGE MICHAEL MUSMANNO AS JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF PENNA. HERE HE AND FEDERAL JUDGE GOURLEY ARE SEEN WITH MEMBERS OF THE MUSMANNO FAMILY. THE LOCAL JURIST NOW BEGINS A 21 YEAR TERM IN THE STATE HIGHEST COURT. CHARLES MARGIOTTE GIVES HIS OLD FRIEND CONGRATULATIONS, AS DOES MR CAT-*AN*–ZARO, JAMES GREY AND SAMUEL GEN-NULA.
> THESE LADIES SEEN WITH JUDGE MUSMANNO ARE MEMBERS OF THE NAVY MOTHERS CLUB OF CARNEGIE.
> MARGARET LEWELLYN, COMMANDER OF THE GROUP PRESENTS JUDGE MUSMANNO WITH A GIFT, A GOLD LETTER OPENER.
> THE JUDGE AND BURGESS COYNE OF CARNEGIE ARE HONORARY MEMBERS OF THE ORGANIZATION.
> HERE YOU SEE THE TWO MEN TOGETHER.
> JUDGE MUSMANNO TAKES OATH FOR STATE SUPREME COURT!

There is considerable emphasis on naming and identifying people, yet there is also factual information. The script for the third story has no people but is replete with facts to accompany the dramatic pictures of rising rivers, information that would be useful to a commuting public:

> PGH'S RIVERS ARE EXPECTED TO REACH THE 23 FOOT MARK SOMETIME TONIGHT, 2 FEET UNDER THE FLOOD STAGE.
> THE RUN-OFF OF LAST NITES RAIN WILL HIT THIS AREA LATE

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TONITE, BUT THE RIVERS SHOULD BE FALLING FROM THEIR 23 FOOT CREST BY THEN.
ALTHOUGH THE SIGN'S STILL UP, CLAIMING 15 CENTS FOR PARKING, I DOUBT VERY MUCH IF THERE'LL BE ANY CARS WANTING TO PARK, PERHAPS A TUG BOAT OR TWO!
THIS IS THE UNDERPASS LEADING TO THE WARF PARKING AREA, UNDER-WATER AS IS THE PARKING AREA.
SAY, THERE'S ONE SPACE LEFT IN THIS PARKING LOT, JUST ENOUGH ROOM FOR YOUR CAR!!

As Pitt Parade began its fifth year, the emphasis was still on important local news. The script for January 2, 1953, leads with the story of a police rotation plan, which both newspapers put on the front page. A waterline break that caused an automobile to sink into the street was covered by both papers, one on the first page, the other on page two. The honoring of a handicapped postmaster was covered by one paper but buried inside. The 170th anniversary of a local church was on the inside pages of both papers. Two features, one about a civic club, the other about a swim clinic, were ignored by both papers. The final story about Duquesne University basketball was on the sports pages of both papers. The tendency to expand feature stories is evident.

By 1954 there was still news in stories, but the emphasis on stories that could be scheduled in advance was noticeable. For instance, the stories for May 4, 1954, were:

1. The Presbyterian church sponsors a labor-management meeting.
2. The civic commemoration of the 200th anniversary of St. Mary's Church, Pittsburgh's first place of worship.
3. One hundred "outstanding young men" honored.
4. Fran Allison of television's "Kukla, Fran, and Ollie" speaks to the Advertising Club.
5. A college reunion.
6. A "Loyalty Day" parade.
7. College "Cadet Corps" ceremony.
8. A college for women dedicates a new building.
9. College women's olympics.

Only three of the stories were included in both newspapers, none on the front page. The script for all these stories illustrates the softer focus. The second story, carried by both newspapers too, is typical:

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ST. MARY OF MERCY CHURCH, ON FERRY STREET, NEAR THE POINT, IS THE SCENE OF A CIVIC COMMEMORATION OBSERVING THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF PITTSBURGH'S FIRST PLACE OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP. ON APRIL 17TH, 1754, A FRENCH CHAPLAIN CONSTRUCTED A SMALL CHAPEL AND CELEBRATED MASS FOR THE TROOPS AT FORT DUQUESNE.

CLAIRE MARIE KANE SINGS THE NATIONAL ANTHEM AS THE OUTDOOR PROGRAM BEGINS. CHAIRMAN OF THE BI-CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION IS JAMES M. LARKIN, OF THE FORT PITT GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS, WHO ARRANGED FOR THE CIVIC DAY COMMEMORATION.

JOHN A. DUTCHMAN INTRODUCES THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES, SIR KNIGHT JOHN F. DONLEY, MASTER OF THE SECOND PA. DISTRICT.

OTHER RELIGIOUS AND CIVIC DIGNITARIES ARE GUEST SPEAKERS AT THE OUTDOOR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION. THE PROGRAM CLIMAXES A WEEK-LONG OBSERVANCE.

The facts are there—it is a news story—but the softer, magazine focus with an emphasis on people is unmistakable. The establishment of traditional news in the form of the studio-based "anchor" was probably a factor in shifting Pitt Parade to a softer, "magazine" focus.

By 1956, although there were still hard-news stories, the soft features had increased in number, partly in response to audience requests for coverage, which showed a desire to be "on television." The result was more "people stories." The stories for January 5, 1956, are a good example:

1. A fire that destroyed seven houses and left twenty-four people homeless.
2. An American Legion meeting.
3. The auto show.
4. The opening of the March of Dimes drive.
5. Arthur Fiedler of the Boston Pops arrives in Pittsburgh.
6. George Washington Carver Week.
7. A college football team arrives home from the Sugar Bowl.
8. Pro hockey report.

Five of the eight stories were in both newspapers, two were in one; only the lead story received front-page treatment by one paper. Although all the

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stories except the lead story are soft—more feature than hard news—the lead story illustrates the continuing emphasis on "spot" news, reflecting one of the primary sources for news: the police and fire radio:

> A 4-ALARM FIRE IN THE WEST END EARLY THIS MORNING RESULTED IN THE DEATH OF A WOMAN AND THE DESTRUCTION OF 7 DWELLINGS.
> 24 PERSONS WERE FORCED FROM THEIR HOMES AT ABOUT 5:30 THIS MORNING WHEN THE FIRST ALARM WAS SOUNDED.
> HERE FIREMEN REMOVE THE BODY OF MRS ANNA STORK WHO WAS FOUND DEAD IN HER BEDROOM, NO DOUBT FROM SUFFOCATION.
> IN ALL, 7 CONNECTED HOUSES WERE DESTROYED, ALL OF THE OCCUPANTS EXCEPT MRS STORK REACHED SAFETY.
> ACCORDING TO CHIEF ADLEY, THE BLAZE BEGAN IN THE KITCHEN OF ONE OF THE BURNED HOUSES, FROM CAUSES UNKNOWN. DAMAGE TO THE 7 TWO STORY FRAME STRUCTURES HAS BEEN ESTIMATED AT 40 THOUSAND DOLLARS.
> HERE ARE A FEW OF THE FOLKS FORCED FROM THEIR HOMES, MRS ELVA SCHULTZ, TOM MEZYNSKI, AND JOSEPHINE MEZYNSKI.
> THIS IS LT OWEN MCNICKLES AND FIRE CHIEF STEVE ADLEY.
> THE DEAD WOMAN, MRS ANNA STORK IS REPORTED TO HAVE TOLD HER ROOMMATE SHORTLY BEFORE THE FIRE THAT SHE WAS AFRAID OF SOMETHING, BUT DIDN'T KNOW WHAT.
> 1 DIES, 24 HOMELESS IN WEST END 4 ALARM FIRE.

The metamorphosis into a magazine-feature format was nearly complete, as hard news faded. But the convention of starting with a hard-news lead continued. The lead could be a story that had a major impact on the public, or simply a dramatic spot story. The lineup for September 25, 1957, had these stories:

1. Parkway construction progress report.
2. Rotary Club hears a USO representative.
3. Mayor Lawrence Day picnic.
4. Businesswomen hold a friendship tea.
5. Woman's club holds antique show.
6. Golden Age hobby show.

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7. Band festival.
8. College football practice.

Only two stories were in both newspapers, four were in just one paper, and two were in neither. None was on the front page.

By 1958, features made up the bulk of Pitt Parade's format, but the emphasis on spot news leads was still conspicuous. The first three stories for January 2, 1958, were front-page stories for both newspapers:

1. Multiple-alarm fire.
2. Explosion at a car wash.
3. Snowfall creates icy driving conditions.

The remaining stories are either ignored by the newspapers or treated as features, buried on the inside pages of one paper or the other:

4. Auto crash (three to the hospital).
5. Coroner sworn in.
6. Army recruiting.
7. Kiwanis Club.
8. Band concert.
9. Polar bear swim.

Sports stories were scattered throughout Pitt Parade from the very beginning, but only when pictures were available. The practice of having a sports story near the end of the program evolved gradually and was never mandatory. Closing with sports became common. Perhaps the custom of putting sports last was the result of live television news, for the practice did not develop until early 1953, after WDTV was doing expanded live news. But there was never an attempt to provide a comprehensive roundup of sports scores. The usual practice was to close with one sports story that there was some reason to film. A closing story from January 18, 1954, is typical:

> AFTER DEFEATING TOLEDO LAST WEEK IN THEIR FIRST VICTORY OF THE SEASON, THE MUSCLE-MEN OF PITT'S WRESTLING TEAM SCORE ANOTHER WIN OVER VISITING MICHIGAN STATE COLLEGE. THIS MATCH, IN THE 167-POUND CLASS, FEATURES THE PANTHERS SOPHOMORE ED DE WITT AGAINST TED LENNOX, OF MICHIGAN. THE UNUSUAL FEATURE OF THIS MAT BATTLE IS

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THAT LENNOX, A JUNIOR WRESTLING STAR AND ONCE A RUNNER-UP IN THE MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIP BOUTS, IS COMPLETELY BLIND! HE'S GIVING HIS PITT OPPONENT PLENTY OF TROUBLE, AS YOU CAN SEE! IT'S FAR FROM BEING A ONE-SIDED MATCH, AND THE BLIND WRESTLER DESERVES A LOT OF CREDIT FOR HIS COURAGE AND DETERMINATION.

THE PANTHERS EVENTUALLY CONQUERED THE SPARTANS OF MICHIGAN, WINNING BY A SCORE OF 21 TO 9.

Other sports stories included baseball, football, hockey, and track-and-field, and more unusual sports, such as dog races and even checkers matches.

The best evidence—the scripts themselves—indicates that Pitt Parade covered major breaking local stories in an energetic way, by news standards of the day. Its format included what might be called "good news"—feature stories about the accomplishments of people and organizations in the community, which provided a counterpoint to spot news stories of crime and disaster. Human-interest stories provided a welcome relief in the mix of news, and all that without the face of an anchor on camera. Broadcast journalism was done energetically and creatively, shaping the forms and conventions of the genre from the very beginning. Those forms and conventions would help shape local television news later.

Thus far we have evaluated Pitt Parade from oral history, written material of the time, and program scripts, but it must be remembered that Pitt Parade was a television program that was in the process of being created as ways to use the new medium were being invented. Therefore, Pitt Parade should also be judged in the context of the contemporary state of the television art. During the initial, pre-studio years, programming was severely limited. Finding programs for the new medium was a constant concern for local stations. Because it had a monopoly, WDTV could choose programs from the four networks; the coaxial cable brought a full evening's menu from which to select programs for prime-time viewing. DuMont had boxing and wrestling live from Chicago, as well as an assortment of variety and game shows from New York. WDTV supplemented its own network's programs with selections from CBS, NBC, and ABC.

Program selection was not entirely by chance. When local corporations that sponsored national programs on other networks demanded that WDTV broadcast their programs, Larry Israel devised what he called an "alternating-rotating system": "I got everybody in, but they couldn't get in every week.

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They had to take either every fourth week or every second week or every third week, but everybody got in." While prime-time evening hours had too many choices, there were many other hours in the broadcast day to fill. The networks supplied some afternoon programs, such as NBC's "Howdy Doody" and DuMont's "Captain Video," but that left many programming gaps.

The initial broadcast day began at 11:00 A.M. with the test pattern, and programs followed at 12:45 P.M. The test pattern gave viewers the opportunity to tune their primitive sets. Paul Long, who had purchased a television set to watch the first program, Your Magic Window, said:

> Westinghouse had this rather large box with a little ten-inch screen in the middle of it. And it had several knobs that you had to twist to keep it from flipping and flopping and going this way and that. But I got a pretty good picture of the Syria Mosque, and there was old Ed up there emoting as Old Ed could do, and he was very good at it.

Filling that ten-inch screen with programs during the afternoon hours was a challenge.

Many of the programs were on 16 mm film. Richard Dreyfuss had been a shipper of kinescopes for CBS in New York before being hired by WDTV to be film director. "My major responsibility was the acquisition and procurement of film," he said. "At that time there wasn't much product programming available. The syndicated programming really was nonexistent with the exception of a few shows." West Coast filmmakers, such as Hal Roach Studios, Screen Gems, and others, worked to develop television series for local stations, which were desperate for material, but their products were inferior, similar to Grade B theatrical films. The one show Dreyfuss cited as a good example was Fred Ziv's production of The Cisco Kid. Dreyfuss pointed out that because Ziv had the foresight to film in color his series had a longevity the others lacked. But quality production was the exception, not the standard.

There were only eight or ten syndicators to choose from, Dreyfuss recalled, while today there are hundreds. The features available were often so poorly done that the local station cut them up, deleting portions, to fit them into a particular time period. Dreyfuss cited as an example one WDTV program "Stars on Parade." The program was created by cutting up musical feature films called "Snader's," named for Louis B. Snader's Transcriptions Studios. The routine at Snader's studio is an example of the kind of production syndicators did:

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> Sixty-minute films were completed on shooting schedules of one and one-half to three days; thirty-minute telefilms reached stations five days after shooting was completed; and single performers would shoot seven short television films in a morning and five more in an afternoon of a single day.[17]

WDTV would cut a Snader into three-minute musical vignettes and splice them together to form Stars on Parade. It was not high quality, but it filled television time.

Some movies were available, but they were older and mostly inferior films. Larry Israel recalled cutting up old westerns to make a half-hour segment for the 6:00 P.M. time slot.

> We cut them up and made episodes out of them, a half-hour each night. I think if you look in the program schedule somewhere you'll find something called Video Adventures. Video Adventures was a western, and we sliced it up to do an episode every night.

Israel laughed as he remembered getting calls from a man from an advertising agency:

> He'd call me and say, "Larry, I want to buy some time for my client. But the program I like that I see every night is this Video Adventures [Which he pronounced "Vid-day-Oh Adventures"]. And I'd laugh and say "I know exactly what you mean." And he said, "Those cowboys and those westerns."

Although the films were dated, their technical quality was passable for the time. Kinescopes—recordings of a live program filmed from a television monitor—were new, but the quality was terrible. The alternative was to find ways to do local programs. One solution was to find live remotes that would appeal to the audience. Apart from an occasional special event, such as a county fair, sports provided an answer. Bob Battenfelter looked back on inventing ways to broadcast a baseball game as one of the highlights of his long career as a television engineer. Because he had been a baseball radio broadcaster he was assigned to be technical director for the first broadcast of a Pirates game at Forbes Field. It was his job to switch from one camera to another as they followed the play. "The director would say 'One' and I'd say 'One's on.' Thirty-nine years later and I still do it—'Two's on, one's on, two's

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on'—that was the only way the cameramen knew they were actually on, because the tally lights were terrible." The truly amazing thing is that, in contrast to today's modern technology, they did the games with only two cameras and no zoom lens. Battenfelter remembered an episode when St. Louis was playing Pittsburgh and Joe Garagiola was doing play-by-play for the Cardinals using WDTV's pictures. "The telephone rang and the crew chief answered. The call was from St. Louis, complaining that they had not agreed to pay for more than two cameras—You can't tell me you're doing that ball game with two cameras and fixed lenses." So Garagiola had to get on the phone to tell them there were indeed only two cameras. Garagiola said, "I don't know how they're doing it. One guy says 'One,' the other guy punches it, he says 'One,' then two does something, then they go 'Two' and they're doing it with two cameras." Battenfelter added: "We were so dumb we didn't know you should do three cameras or four." They were inventing creative ways to use the technology of a new medium.

Although Packaged Programs continued to sell its own advertising for the first year of Pitt Parade, the company produced another quarter-hour program for WDTV, which the station sold. Station officials approached Bill Beal and said, "We'll give you another fifteen-minutes at 6:15 if you can put on a household show." The program, done entirely on film and shot on location, was called "Home Is Happiness," in keeping with the popularity of the home in the 1950s. "It was household hints," recalled Beal. "My wife used to make sandwiches and we'd show how to make a particular type of sandwich, or how to take care of a child, how to do household chores." Beal told how one program hostess was in the Junior League and wanted to get a start in television. "She'd come in and look over all the material and write her commentary and then go up and just do it the way I did it." That was the occasion for moving Pitt Parade to 7:45 P.M.

Because the basic program block was fifteen minutes and Pitt Parade filled just ten, another five minutes were needed to fill the slot. The solution was "Viz Quiz," done entirely on film. The announcer for Viz Quiz was Bill Hinds, a veteran of KDKA radio who had moved to WDTV (and no relation to the author). Hinds described the feature this way:

> A little monkey was in a pet store down in Liberty Avenue. And someone saw this one day and it was doing all these cute antics and kids were gathering around and [someone] said, "Hey, that'd be a good TV show." I didn't know what TV was—I'd just started. But the Jay Rich agency picked it up and wrote this five-minute quiz,

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> asking questions of the monkey. And he'd jump around, do this and that, and I'd say, "That's the answer!"

The questions were about local Pittsburgh happenings. Viz Quiz proved to be less than memorable, because most of the people who did oral history interviews couldn't seem to remember what Viz Quiz was, but it sold television time. Dick Dreyfuss remembered that Viz Quiz was about three and a half minutes long, with a commercial filling out the remaining five minutes. He attested that, like so much of early television, Viz Quiz was produced by an advertising agency.

In the context of the local programs produced in those early days, with the primitive technology available and no tradition to draw from, Pitt Parade fares well. Pitt Parade cameramen were given two minutes of film to cover a story—the economics of the production dictated only two minutes. Getting to the story, shooting film, getting the film back to be processed, edited, and having a script written set a daily deadline that was demanding and limiting. In addition to the hectic news schedule, there was the burden of producing the program's commercials. Bill Beal's description of those early days is vivid: "We tried to get as much hard news as possible while I was there. I worked about eighteen hours a day constantly, even on weekends, because weekends we used to make commercials."

Dick Roebling, who had worked part-time for Beal while still a college student, was the first producer of Pitt Parade's commercials. When he graduated, in 1949, he saw that television was really humming, so he went to work for Packaged Programs, helping to write and edit Pitt Parade. But soon his main task was creating commercials. Although most of the commercials were done outside, there was a makeshift studio in which title boards were shot on 16 mm film. "We designated one huge room as the studio for the commercials," Roebling said. "We bought a lot of seamless paper and put it up on the wall and just created commercials." He recalled one example in some detail, a commercial for "Auto Row," a group of automobile dealers on West Liberty Avenue who had formed a consortium for advertising:

> I wrote a script based on how you get to Auto Row. We did a terrible, terrible thing about pirates digging up a treasure. We went down to a sand and gravel company with this huge pile of sand and buried a chest. Inside the chest we had put an old map we had drawn that was really directions to West Liberty Avenue.

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Roebling said he operated by "blind luck," watching movies and watching what other people were doing on television.

Given television programming in that period and the limitations of the technology, it is easy to understand what George Eisenhauer meant when he assessed Pitt Parade looking back from the perspective of some thirty years: "I don't want to say it was a *good* show, but it *was* a good show. It was a show that was viable. They had all the personalities of Pittsburgh on that show. They did fires, they did news—hard news, if you want to call it that—plus all the fluff they had to do. But it was a good show for its time."

Pitt Parade was a news program. And compared with the primitive nature of news done by the station itself, with headlines read over a slide in the rip-and-read manner of radio news, Pitt Parade was truly an innovative effort. It was unsophisticated by today's standards, certainly, but it was in keeping with the amorphous state of television at the time. From the experimentation of those days, the pioneers were learning how to present news on television in ways that utilized the distinctive nature of the medium: pictures. The forms and practices developed or adapted for filming various kinds of stories became standard as television news developed. The influence those conventions of filming had on the interpretive nature of television news cannot be overstated.

Only as WDTV neared its second anniversary was it able to move operations from the transmitter to its first television studio. With the new studio came a renewed effort to develop local programs. By 1951, Pittsburghers had developed a taste for more than the test pattern, which early viewers would watch with fascination, and for more than old films and shadowy kinescopes. Out of the effort to create local programs produced in a studio, came the second phase of television news in Pittsburgh.

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3 On-Camera News

Radio with Pictures

WDTV opened its first studio on November 19, 1950. After nearly two years of purchasing programs made elsewhere and relaying them from the transmitter, the station could finally make and broadcast its own programs. The first edition of a local magazine devoted entirely to television, *Television News,* [1] arrived on the newsstands the same week the new studio opened. If you had paid a dime for a copy of that first edition, you would have seen the lead article by Editor Bill Adler announcing the arrival of live television in Pittsburgh.

> WDTV opened its long-planned studio in the Chamber of Commerce Building for the production of live television. Last Sunday the studios were opened with the telecasting of the Wilkins Amateur Hour. Before that all telecasting came by cable from the networks or by projection of motion picture film from the transmitter.[2]

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The new studio was located on the second floor of the Chamber of Commerce Building, which was also the location of WDTV's business offices, on the tenth floor. The room had evidently once served as an auditorium, for the room was 48 feet by 57 feet, with a ceiling about fifteen feet high. Adjacent to the studio was a control room, set apart by a large window, and a booth for live narration was nearby. Sets were lined up around the walls so the two cameras in use could easily move from one set to another. WDTV could now go about the business of making its own television programs.

For Pittsburghers, live programming marked a new era in local television. One month after the new studio opened, Larry Israel told the press: "We intend to get rid of bad films, of which viewers have justly complained. Kinescopes of live shows, for which we do not have time, will have to be brought up to high standards or we'll drop them. We promise our audience improved telecasts."[3] For the first time, WDTV had the ability to eliminate inferior imported programming, now that they could produce their own programs and fill the schedule with local fare.

And fill the schedule they did. The test pattern was soon pushed up from 11:00 to 10:00 in the morning and the first program was on the air at 11:30. By the following autumn the test pattern began at 8:30 in the morning, with the day's first program at 9:00 A.M. By January 1952, just one year after the new studio made local programs possible, the test pattern was on the screen at 6:45 A.M. and Pittsburghers could watch NBC's new "Today Show" at 7:00 A.M. Just two months later WDTV became the nation's first television station to broadcast twenty-four hours a day with the inauguration of "Swing-Shift Theater." WDTV's ability to produce its own programs created a growth spurt in Pittsburgh television, and that soon included news.

Most television broadcasters had come from radio, so it was natural for them to look to radio as a program source. Radio was what they knew, and as the creators of early radio had looked to vaudeville for programs, the creators of early television looked to radio. In those days radio had a variegated menu of local programs to choose from. Equally important, radio was where the sponsors spent their money. So the model for local television, including news, was local radio. Local radio talent moved into television, bringing with them familiar program concepts that could be adapted for television, and above all accompanied by advertising revenue. In those days, however, local radio was quite different from today's local radio formats, which tend to feature music and news throughout the day. To appreciate the influential

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role local radio played in the creation of local television programming, we must understand that local radio in those days was "old-fashioned, big-time radio." And in Pittsburgh, radio was spelled K-D-K-A.

KDKA is a prime example of old-time, local radio. "KD," as it was known, filled its programming day with a combination of nationally produced shows from NBC and locally produced live programs. KDKA simply dominated the market. Local performers on KD were celebrities. Jim Snyder's description conveys the awe with which the station was regarded.

> KDKA had this roster of people and they promoted them, and you walked into the lobby of that thing, and the master control was surrounded by plate glass and the marble lobby and a nice receptionist and these big studios where they produced these shows.

Announcers were hired for their voices and their presentational skills. George Eisenhauer remembered that when he was in high school he appeared on a radio program to talk about economics, selected by his teacher because of his deep voice. After the program the manager of the radio station approached him to say, "For a fifteen-year-old you have a fairly resonant, mature voice. Would you like to be a radio announcer?" "In those days," said Jim Snyder, "the audience and the newspapers and everybody judged these men on their dulcet tones and what kind of on-the-air presentation they had." When Al McDowell moved from a small station in nearby McKeesport to KDKA, it was as a news writer for the announcers, men who were "deep-throated," with "voices that sounded like God," as McDowell put it. Announcers were treated in a special manner too. "They had announcers' lounges," said McDowell, "a sacrosanct place. I could not go into the announcers' lounge. I simply wasn't invited. I was a news writer. I was not an announcer."

The staff announcers had a variety of local programs to do, and few of the programs included playing records, for those were the days of live radio. Before the station joined the NBC network at 9:00 A.M., several live programs had already been on the air. From 6:00 A.M. until 7:00 A.M. there was Farm Hour, featuring news for farmers and the country music of Slim Bryant and the Wildcats, performed live. Ed Schaughency did a morning program, playing sixteen-inch records made especially for radio.[4] He was assisted in his dialogue by another white announcer, "Rainbow Jackson," who spoke in a black dialect in the manner of "Amos 'n' Andy." Jim Snyder recalled some of the specialty programs:

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> In the grand old tradition of those kinds of stations, 50,000-watt clear channel stations, they had a morning cooking show. Evelyn Gardner was a woman who did a cooking show, and they had a kitchen there in the studio where she would do her cooking, and they would give tours and show people that facility.

He said that a fringe benefit for the announcers was getting to eat the food she cooked.

> They had another show by a woman named Janet Ross who sort of gave shopping tips, lifestyle things, and all that. They used to do programs of organ music with a local staff guy. There was a man named Jim Westover who was a staff announcer, and later he became a newscaster solely, but I also remember him doing a show called "Organ Logs," where he would play the organ in this big studio. And I'm talking about the late forties or early fifties, and KDKA radio made a lot of money doing musical programs.

Early evening was a prime slot for music. The KDKA orchestra was mentioned over and over again when those days were recalled. Paul Long met and married one of "The Kinder Sisters," a trio who, he said, "sang almost every night on KDKA behind a twenty-five-piece band." Bill Hinds was announcer for Tap Time, a musical program sponsored by the Fort Pitt Brewing Company. At one time the Pittsburgh Brewing Company and the Duquesne Brewing Company also sponsored musical programs. Each of the three programs had a different conductor and a different name for the orchestra, but the same musicians played each night. They would rehearse from 1:00 until 3:00 in the afternoon, said Hinds. "We'd take a half-hour break, come back up and dress for the show till five. We'd break, go out for dinner, and come back. Get dressed into a tuxedo, I would, girls in evening dress, for fourteen people in the audience."

The cynosure of broadcasting when television began in Pittsburgh was KDKA. It was the "old-fashioned, big-time radio station," as Jim Snyder put it, to which announcers from smaller stations aspired. Paul Long, a veteran television newscaster in Pittsburgh at the start of the 1990s, is a typical example of how announcers moved up from small to larger stations as they acquired radio skills. A native Texan, Long had worked at a radio station in Longview before the war. He learned radio by practice rather than

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by formal education. In September 1940, Long recalled, he was handed a box and told:

> This is an amplifier, and when you get down to the high school stadium, you'll find two little wires in here. You hook those two little wires into those two little wires that are hanging out of the booth out there, and set this up on the table and there's a microphone there, and you turn the attenuator until you see that little needle going up like that, and you're on the air.

Long added, "I was the crew, I was the engineer, I was the announcer. I had never done a football game in my life. And so I was the football announcer that year." On another occasion Long was sent downtown to hook up and describe a parade. When he asked what the parade was about, he was told to just go describe it. "I had no idea what it was. I had no idea then or now what the heck was going on. But these are the kinds of things radio did in those days. In a small town, you had to fill up the time."

Long moved to a station in Shreveport, Louisiana, before joining the Air Force. After the war he returned to a guaranteed job, but soon he determined to move on.

> I immediately sent out a batch of brochures and discs, little recording discs, five- to seven-inch discs, on which, sneaking into the control room when nobody was looking, we would record, say, a five-minute newscast, and fix that up and put some brown paper around it and ship it off to the program director wherever.

When one of the discs elicited a reply from KDKA, Long drove to Pittsburgh and began work at KDKA radio on June 19, 1946. He would move to television news when WDTV became KDKA-TV. Long's story is one that was replicated, with different but similar details, by most of the people who began local television in Pittsburgh. Dave Murray got out of the Navy in 1946 to work in radio in Covington, Kentucky. Bill Hinds started as an office boy at KDKA and became the station's youngest staff announcer. Bill Brandt began at WJPA in Washington, Pennsylvania, in 1942 before joining KDKA in 1945. Ray Scott started in radio in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, before he became the first sportscaster for WDTV. George Eisenhauer began at WWSW before moving to KDKA, then to WDTV as their first staff announcer. Florence Sando had produced and moderated her own

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programs on both KQV and WJAS and had been "Director of Women's Radio" at WCAE before moving into television in 1951. Nick Perry was working in Pittsburgh radio when he took a second job in television. Holding onto radio was a safety measure, in case television did not last. Perry did a 6:00 A.M. radio shift, leaving the air at 2:00 P.M. to drive to WDTV's transmitter, where he was a booth announcer from 3:30 P.M. until 2:00 A.M. the next morning. When he fell asleep one day during a radio newscast, he abandoned radio to work full-time as a television staff announcer.

Bill Brandt's experience reflects the prestige announcers acquired by becoming part of the KD staff. Brandt joined KDKA in 1945, having worked his way from a small-town station to WWSW, an independent station that played records twenty-four hours a day. When he joined KDKA, he said, they had about fifty records. Instead of records, the announcers played the sixteen-inch electrical transcriptions made specifically for broadcast. Because he had experience playing records, Brandt became the first disc jockey for the station, although his title was still "announcer":

> So that show was called "The Midnighters Club," and because of 50,000 watts in clear channel I had listeners all over the world. There weren't as many radio stations on the air at that time. I had listeners in Maracaibo, Venezuela, Nova Scotia, Australia—just everywhere. It was pretty fantastic.

Just as announcers aspired to reach KDKA, many turned to television as soon as the new medium made its debut. "Buzz and Bill," a radio program Bill Hinds did with Buzz Astin, a man who could croon like Bing Crosby, illustrated the transition of programs from radio to television. Hinds and Astin were doing their radio program for WJAS radio in the Chamber of Commerce Building when WDTV opened its studios in the same building. They continued on radio while they broke into television. Said Hinds:

> As soon as we finished on the air eight to nine o'clock in the morning [on radio], we got on the elevator and went right downstairs [to the television studio] and we'd brush up a couple of songs and things we were going to do and go on the air at nine-thirty to ten o'clock. Every day of the week.

Radio was a natural source of programs for a new television station that needed programming. And it was natural to emulate the production of the

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successful programs of the day in the beginning, adapting them by trial and error to the visual medium of television. News would be no exception, for newscasts also were adapted from radio in the search for programming suitable for television. But local radio news then was not the well-developed genre it is today.

With studio capability, television news would be done by announcers, who soon would no longer remain anonymous behind a slide, but appear on camera.[5] Advertising agencies would employ announcers who would be the exclusive representative of a product on a newscast sponsored entirely by one company. But the model for television news was radio, for the announcers had come to television from radio and brought the familiar formula with them. At its inception, local television news was simply radio news with pictures. The picture on the screen was the announcer sitting behind a desk, reading into a microphone.

But if television news was radio news with pictures, it is critical to understand what local radio news was at the time. It is a popular misconception that by then radio news was well developed, but the facts do not support that assumption, especially for local radio. Local radio news at that time was not synonymous with today's radio news. Today we hear the voices and sounds of news, "actualities" gathered by a radio reporter over the telephone or in person by tape recorder and edited to form a highly produced newscast. The model of radio news adopted by television consisted simply of a reporter taking copy, from a newspaper or a wire service—perhaps rewritten, perhaps not—and reading it into a microphone. During the morning at KDKA there was a ten-minute newscast at 7:00 and a five-minute newscast at 7:30, with a full fifteen minutes of news at 8:00 A.M. and again at noon. "That was a full fifteen minutes of the newscaster reading," Snyder said. "I mean, there were no actualities in there or anything. He read the news, and many times he read the commercials too, or a staff announcer would read a commercial." That was the last local newscast until 6:00 P.M. and 11:00 P.M. It was hardly the quality of radio news experienced today.

Radio news had developed slowly during the 1930s and early 1940s—radio's live "Golden Age"—and had not approached the sophistication of today. The fact is that radio did not develop into an important channel for news until the coming of World War II, beginning with the Munich Crisis of 1938. The emerging world crisis resulted in network radio's developing independent news sources: correspondents to provide eyewitness accounts of events. Before that, the news source was newspapers and wire services, with items taken from those sources read aloud by an announcer. Radio

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news was slower to develop than most suppose. While NBC had started regular news broadcasts in 1930, with Lowell Thomas summarizing news events in a nightly fifteen-minute newscast,[6] local stations did little more than read occasional stories taken from newspapers or the same wire services that supplied newspapers, on an irregular basis. Since a large portion of radio stations were owned by newspaper publishers, the news was often just a headline service, with the added advice to buy a newspaper to get the details.

Yet even this minimal amount of news on radio was perceived as a threat by newspapers, and in 1933 a "press-radio war" developed. Newspaper publishers, who controlled Associated Press, voted to suspend service to radio stations, and the other wire services followed. This put local stations in a real bind. Harry Bannister, who managed WWJ in Detroit, had a trained reporter—rare for radio at the time, he says—who stole items from the newspaper and disguised them for broadcast. "Our problem was pretty general throughout the radio business," Bannister said. "There was no news service then available for radio. Therefore, news was a comparatively minor factor in radio programming."[7] Stations either made an arrangement with a local newspaper or pirated the information. The practice of using newspapers as a primary source of news set a precedent that would last. Harry Bright provides a typical example. In 1939 he was working for a local station in Clarksburg, West Virginia, when the owner, who also owned the local newspaper, decided to introduce a local newscast at 11:05 P.M., following the network's five-minute "Esso Reporter."

> His idea of providing copy for the broadcast called for the local newspaper staff to make carbon copies of the local news they wrote and bring it to the station about ten-thirty each evening. The copy as delivered left plenty of room for improvement since it was a carbon copy, written in newspaper parlance.[8]

During this period, then, newspapers were a main source of radio news.

The other main source for radio news was the wire. When wire service was denied in 1933, both CBS and NBC started their own news-gathering operations, but soon a compromise that ended the official "press war" was reached. The networks agreed to suspend their own news-gathering efforts in exchange for a service that would supply stations with enough copy for two five-minute newscasts each day, to be broadcast only after the news had first been printed in newspapers. This "Biltmore Agreement,"

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named for the hotel in which it was reached, lasted only briefly and never worked well, but it did have two notable results. It made it possible for radio to use the wire services to gather the news, which they simply relayed to listeners, rather than invest in their own news-gathering operations, and it gave rise to the radio "commentator," because the agreement exempted commentators. Consequently many newscasters became commentators, although most continued, with several notable exceptions, to do "little more than summarize news bulletins, throwing in an occasional editorial comment."[9]

The coming of war gave a tremendous boost to radio news.[10] Harry Bannister, speaking of local station WWJ, said: "Newscasts and news commentaries were added all over the schedule, there being an apparently insatiable appetite for this type of programming both by the audience and by prospective sponsors."[11] In fact, an important motivation for adding local newscasts was the availability of sponsors. Earlier in the decade most newscasts were "sustaining"—that is, unsponsored—which station owners believed would convince the FCC that stations were serving the public, free of commercial bias. That changed with the rise of network commentators, who depended on sponsors for their existence, to the point that many commentators were closely identified with a particular sponsor, incorporating commercials for the product in the copy.

The rise of the commentators can be traced directly to the crisis of the coming war. A broadcaster for CBS during the Munich Crisis, H. V. Kaltenborn, set the standard, and was soon followed by others, such as Raymond Gram Swing, Elmer Davis, and Edward R. Murrow.[12] The commentators brought drama to radio. Whether sitting in a New York studio for nearly twenty days, as Kaltenborn did during the Munich Crisis, or broadcasting from London during the blitz, as Edward R. Murrow did, commentators attracted listeners with the drama of the spoken word. The dramatic pause in Murrow's opening to his twice-daily newscasts, "This—is London," captured the imagination of the American audience. It was a far cry from a factual account of the same story in a newspaper, and it paled in comparison to local radio news, which was "live" only in the sense that a newscaster was "live" reading copy that had been distilled from other sources.

Although broadcasting from the scene of a story as it occurred was a rarity in local radio news, the notion that the live quality of radio news made it distinctive lingers on. A recent book on the history of radio says the immediacy of radio in those days was what "enabled listeners to experience an event as it happened."[13] Tom Lewis cites as evidence Herb Morrison's

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account of the *Hindenburg* disaster: "Rather than learn of the *Hindenburg* explosion the next day, people felt the power of the inferno the moment it occurred." Lewis is not the first to make this false assumption, nor is he likely to be the last. In reality, the previous day Morrison had made a recording that was not played on the air until he flew back to Chicago, where the recording was broadcast just before noon the next day. The account is worth noting, in part because of Herb Morrison's Pittsburgh connection.

Herb Morrison was a reporter at WLS Chicago when in the spring of 1937 he had been flown across the Ohio River valley to witness the devastating floods of that year. His broadcast description of what he had seen produced an enthusiastic response from listeners, and that encouraged Morrison to test new equipment that would enable him to record his description of an event as it occurred. On May 5, 1937, he and audio engineer Charlie Nielsen flew to Lakehurst, New Jersey, in order to test a "Presto" recorder while describing the descent of the *Hindenburg* as it landed the next day. Morrison was recording his account of a routine landing—the dirigible had been making the trip regularly for a year—when the *Hindenburg* burst into flames and crashed. Morrison continued to record, but in a highly personal, dramatic manner. Morrison recorded about forty minutes' worth of material, then flew back to Chicago, where the recording was played on the air for the first time at 11:45 the next morning. Morrison's account is unforgettable, both for those who may have heard it in 1937 and for those who have heard the recording.[14] It won Morrison a job at WOR in New York.

Until Morrison's report, almost everything was live—but live from a studio. NBC had to violate its ban on broadcasting recordings to play the *Hindenburg* report the day after it happened. Since 1933 the Federal Radio Commission, forerunner of the FCC, had insisted that each phonograph record be identified as "an electrical transcription," a phrase older radio announcers remember well. (The FCC relaxed the requirement to once each quarter-hour three years later.) Even radio drama was live until 1946, when ABC broke the recording ban in order to lure Bing Crosby away from NBC, and the other networks soon followed ABC. There were occasional live news reports from the scene, including a report of a dirigible landing at Lakehurst in 1929, when Floyd Gibbons strapped a portable shortwave transmitter to his chest to report the landing of the Graf Zeppelin, but such reports were infrequent. In 1925 the Scopes trial was broadcast live from Dayton, Tennessee, while in March 1932, CBS and NBC rushed to Hopewell,

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New Jersey, to report live from the scene of the Lindbergh kidnapping. The trial of Bruno Hauptmann was reported live in 1935, and the next year Gabriel Heater went to Trenton, New Jersey, to report Hauptmann's execution.

It was the drama of the spoken word that made radio news broadcasts distinctive, not so much whether the reports were live or not, for in the vast majority of broadcasts, "live" meant live while sitting in front of a microphone in a studio reading items from newspapers or the wire. This became most apparent during the dramatic years of World War II, when the national commentators exploited, in the words of Quincy Howe, "not a point of view but a voice, a manner, a distinctive way of speaking."[15]

The radio formula of the times was reflected in KDKA Pittsburgh. When Paul Long moved to KDKA in 1946 he found an operation that was much more sophisticated than at the small stations where he had previously worked. "We had a very complete newsroom. We had Reuters, we had Associated Press newspaper wire, we had Associated Press Radio wire, and likewise with UP and UP radio, and International News Service. Later International News Service combined with UP to become UPI." Yet, Long said, "we didn't do a lot of local news." Jim Snyder had similar recollections:

> They had the wires there, the AP and the UP, and they also had INS. And they rearranged that wire copy and put them into the newscast. There was no sending out of reporters to cover the news. Now people might call in and give them a story from time to time, but there was no beat system or outside reporters. They depended completely on the wire service.

From the perspective of a long and successful broadcast career Snyder added:

> In terms of journalistic history that wasn't much of a news operation. In that period, '47 to '50, I never heard of a meeting where the general manager of the station sat the news people down and said: "Now, here's what we're trying to do here." . . . It was rip and read and that's all they wanted. They weren't any more aggressive than that. They worried most about getting guys who would sound good on the air.

Bill Brandt concurs that radio did little news-gathering at that time. "Everything we used came off the wire, unless you had something specific

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that somebody told you about. But they didn't have people out in the field actually gathering the news. That was an unusual circumstance, and I don't know how they got through that period like that, but we did. I think we stole things out of the newspaper too, because they did have people in the streets."

KDKA sporadically did some live broadcasts of important events, as they were able to get staff and equipment in place. One local event covered live by KDKA was the Saint Patrick's Day flood of 1936 in Pittsburgh. "And what a time that was," said Bill Hinds.

> We slept in the studio. We were the only station in town on the air, power coming from diesel motors, running lines up through the windows of the third floor of the Grant Building [where the studios were located]. That's how we got our power to stay on the air, and the only contact Pittsburgh had with the outside world. Telephones were down, everything was down. It really was a thrilling time.

But such occasions were the rare event rather than the rule. As Al McDowell put it: "I have a picture of Ed Schaughency doing a Saint Patrick's Day flood of 1936 on the roof of a Gulf filling station at the Point in Pittsburgh. I suspect it was the last time Ed was ever on the street."

Local stories covered live were remembered because they were rare exceptions. "It had to be a pretty big local story," Long said, "although the first year I was here in 1946 I remember the power strike. And Davy Lawrence had just been elected mayor, and that story went around the clock. We did cover that story because it was a national story." Whether writing their own copy or simply reading copy that had been written for them, announcers sometimes encountered difficulties in those days of live radio. Paul Long was doing a feed for the NBC network of a story about a coal strike just before Christmas. To indicate that coal miners' families would likely have a sparse holiday, he wrote this lead: "John L. Lewis just shot Santa Claus." A retraction soon followed, reviving Santa for shocked children in the radio audience.

When announcers read copy they had not written, and often had not seen before reading it live on the air, it sometimes led to problems. Al McDowell was the primary writer for Ed Schaughency, who liked to personalize his newscast. On one occasion the news copy led with a fire in a Chicago school in which eight children had burned to death. Schaughency's sponsor was a meat company, and he liked to put his personal touch on the commercials,

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so he opened his 8:00 A.M. newscast with a sound effect of bacon frying. "This was before he did the news. And you'd hear this bacon frying and of course you wanted to stop the car and get out and get some bacon. That was the idea." On this particular morning, McDowell remembered,

> [Schaughency] did the commercial, the bacon frying, and then he said, "Now let's see what's cooking in the news." I heard this. I was in the newsroom. I had written the script, and my lead story for it that morning had been the Holy Angel School fire. And I went to my knees and I thought, "We're dead." The boss called me. Fifteen bosses called me. Fifteen thousand people called the newsroom.

Throughout the 1940s, KDKA's news continued to be predominantly rip and read, or in some instances rip and rewrite and read, in accord with the practice of the times. The news on radio was the same news that appeared in newspapers. Howe put it succinctly: "The straight news broadcast gives a condensed version of the same news dispatches you get in your newspaper, because the same news agencies—the Associated Press, the United Press, and the International News Service—provide the information."[16] For most radio stations, newspapers and wire services are their news sources, even for local news, and KDKA was no exception. One story from those days illustrates the dependency on wire services. One day KDKA's news director was returning from lunch when he noticed a fire in the kitchen of the hotel in which the station was located. The news director went immediately to the newsroom and called a wire service to ask, "What's the story on the fire?" That anecdote may be a myth, because a second version has a man committing suicide by jumping from an upper floor, but it does illustrate the approach radio took to news in those days: it was news presentation, not news-gathering. The emphasis was on the sound of news, not on the source.

Television news adopted the radio formula at the start. At first, television news done in WDTV's new studio was rip and read, simply relaying stories taken from the wire and from newspapers, in the custom of radio. News-gathering was not an important element. Television news was live, of course, also following the radio precedent, but live from the studio rather than from the scene. Television also adopted radio's penchant for a strong personality to deliver the news, centering the program on a person who had a good presentation. The emphasis was not on the newscaster's "looks," as it often is today, but on the way he sounded.

At first WDTV continued to do newscasts only at sign-off, just as in

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pre-studio days, when broadcasting was from the transmitter. At midnight each day there was a five-minute newscast, still in the rip-and-read manner, with the voice of a staff announcer heard over a slide that read "News Round Up." The newscast was followed by "Coming Attractions," a billboard for the next day's programming. From November 1950, when the studio opened for production, until February the next year, the only news listed in the program schedule was the five-minute rip-and-read news at midnight. News was clearly not a priority at the beginning of live studio production.

The station did carry some network news. At first there was "Doug Edwards and the News" from CBS, but by early 1952 the CBS news would be replaced by the "Camel News Caravan," with John Cameron Swayze on NBC, on the schedule at 7:45 P.M. By the next year the NBC news was dropped and attention focused on the expansion of local news that could have sponsors and thus be made profitable. In those early days, profits came from selling a block of time to an agency, and that included news. The 6:30 P.M. news slot was now taken by an agency. Ed Wood did the news for Chevrolet. Wood was chosen by the ad agency, paid by the agency, and completed identified with the product. The announcer wrote the news and brought it to the station to be read on camera. There was no attempt to gather news. "There was a radio wire," said Dave Murray, "and that's really all they cared about, only that service. And they would take the five-minute summary and go read it. There could be a fire five blocks down the street and you'd get news from the Middle East."

The agency controlled its newscasts. "If you controlled the news commercially in those days, you certainly had a tremendous influence on what the content of the news was," said Jacques Kahn.

> I would not say it was the best reporting, the most honest reporting in the world. Let's say it was Fort Pitt Beer and in those days something had come out that beer wasn't good for you. It wasn't apt to get on the air in those days. You could control it. You could also insert a personality. You could say I want so-and-so to be on, and the person was connected with the [advertising] industry.

The personality was connected so closely with the sponsor's product that when Ford acquired the news program, "Ed Wood for Chevrolet" was replaced by "Carl Ide for Ford."

That soon began to change. On February 19, 1951, WDTV instituted a

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ten-minute "Noon News," with staff announcer Nick Perry. Thus began the first local television newscast on WDTV featuring an announcer who was seen on camera. By April the title of the noon news was changed to "Neighborhood News." Asked why the station chose him to do the first newscast, Perry replied: "I guess nobody else wanted it, and they gave it to me." There were still only two staff announcers to choose from. The news came from the wire services, including the sports and weather, and Nick Perry read it all. Reading it all included doing live commercials at the request of a client: "More news in a minute, but first this message." Visuals were limited to photographs taken from a facsimile machine that would print the pictures, which would then be framed in cardboard and held up to a camera by Perry. It was radio with a picture of the reporter holding up a few still photographs.

As the station added staff it also added news. Dave Murray, whose experience had been in radio news first, and then in television news, moved from Dayton, Ohio, to WDTV. By February 1952 Murray was doing five minutes of news at 8:55 A.M., following the Today Show. Murray also began to co-anchor the noon news with Nick Perry. By May, Murray was reporting on "The Eleventh Hour News" and although it was only a five-minute newscast it for the first time put television news at the well-established hour that was standard for radio, whose audience expected a news nightcap. WDTV was slowly but surely getting into the production of its own newscasts.

We think of television news as visual accounts of events. But in the beginning (except for Pitt Parade), television cameras were studio cameras. As television developed, studio production was the sole concern. Production textbooks reflect previous practice, and according to one textbook on broadcasting, published in 1952, the ideal television director was one who not only knew how to direct radio programs but also was familiar with the principles of photography and stage presentation, specifically the "principles of pantomime and stage business, stagecraft, costuming, make-up, and choreography."[17]—in short, a studio director. A description of a typical television newscast during the early years provides a vivid picture of the attempt to cope with the visual nature of the new medium.

> One technique... is to have the announcer sit behind a desk in front of a simple set featuring an enlarged map. At his side may be placed a dummy teletype machine to suggest a newsroom, and on his desk may be placed a dummy telephone to conceal a microphone.

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> When he reads his stories without visual aids, the camera is focused on the announcer, who must develop considerable skill in memorization and manuscript delivery so that he can look at the camera instead of his script. When newsreel material or slides are used to illustrate or dramatize an event, they can be inserted into the newscast at the appropriate point, and the announcer, speaking off-camera, supplies a background explanation. Sound effects of teletype machines may be used to introduce and close the show.[18]

The appeal to the visual in newscasts was limited to newsreel material and slides, because the first public demonstration of videotape did not come until 1953. Therefore television directors had to learn to make the most of studio techniques. They borrowed from radio, photography, and the theater and created forms to meet the needs of television.

During this initial period of new studio-production capabilities, the staff of WDTV was answering the kind of charge an anonymous network vice-president had issued in 1949, that although television had "no established taste, no formula, [it is] "a challenge to creative imaginations to learn the basic characteristics of the medium and then devise suitable material for it."[19] Driven by the growing need for better programs, the pioneers of local television worked daily to meet that challenge. Robert Kintner, then head of ABC-TV programming, said of that "golden age": "It was great for the beginning of the medium. But I certainly don't think there was enough product, enough production, know-how and ability to program for the home—where people want constant service, hour after hour."[20] There could never be enough product, and at WDTV there was a constant scramble to develop new programs. Local television news grew out of that challenging period, as news forms developed along with other types of local programs. During the early period of studio production, television news took shape in a context of experimentation, in which local broadcasters were developing various kinds of studio-based programs.

The first program on WDTV is a good example of how local television was done. Bob Stevenson was the producer of the program after he had joined the Wilkins Jewelry Company as advertising manager after he'd learned that they wanted to make their long-running radio program, the "Wilkins Amateur Hour," the first television program in Pittsburgh. Wilkins bought an hour of time on Sunday evening at 6:00 for $400, Stevenson recalled. When the station wanted to use the first five minutes to let Mayor Lawrence inaugurate the new studio, Wilkins said no—the company had

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paid for the time and controlled the program. So the station was forced to begin five minutes early for the brief inaugural ceremony.

Wilkins's advertising agency supplied the director for the first program, a man who had worked in television briefly in New York. (Shortly thereafter Wilkins dissolved its association with the agency and hired the director to work directly for them. Stevenson, who was doing all the writing for the show anyway, became chief producer.) Even though he knew little about the new medium. Stevenson, who had been both a writer and an artist with the *Pittsburgh Press,* wanted to use his talents in television. The first broadcast was an adventure:

> The very first Sunday we started a rehearsal at 8:00 A.M. to get on the air at 6:00 P.M. And we rehearsed the stagehands, because in those days it was live commercials all the way. And at six o'clock, just before we went on the air, all the stagehands left for the day. I'm sitting in the control room saying, "What's happening?" And they said, "Oh, we're off duty at six o'clock." And I said, "My God! Why didn't you tell me that at the beginning of the day? Why do you think we were rehearsing you?" So we had to get the station from then on to work the hours commensurate with our time on the air, because we were a live show at six o'clock. I mean a major show.

The Wilkins Amateur Hour had been broadcast on radio for well over a decade, and for the first year on WDTV it was simulcast over KQV, so the amateur talent had to conform with the limits of radio. "We could still get away with dancers, though—tap dancers, in those days, because they could still hear the taps on radio."

Only two cameras were used for productions in those days. WDTV had three cameras, but the third was kept as a spare, perhaps to avoid paying two additional salaries, since the large, bulky cameras required both an operator and an assistant who was called a "cable-puller" and whose main task was to help move the cameras. Stevenson said the production technique for the Amateur Hour was simple: one camera was on the master of ceremonies, Al Noble, who would introduce the next talent, and the other camera "would be lining up, getting ready to shoot the talent. So the talent would walk into the picture with Al, and the minute Al walked out of the picture the other camera would pick up the talent, and then we would alternate between close-ups and wide shots." Jack Mitchell, a technician with WDTV,

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recalled that it was an immense production. "They didn't use any scenery per se. Maybe a piece of folding flat here and there for the commercials for Wilkins, but mostly it was done against the studio drapes."

Because the sponsor had so much control, considerable attention was paid to commercials. The commercials were two minutes long, and there were three per hour. Each was a live production and had to be carefully rehearsed. Stevenson described what he called a typical commercial:

> We hired a schoolteacher and named her Jane Wilkins. She was our spokesperson. We sold, for instance, Remington shavers—electric shavers were brand-new then. And we developed what we called the sixty-second shave. [Jane Wilkins would hand Al Noble a Remington shaver.] There'd be a big clock behind him and she would go up to him and say, "Oh, your face feels so smooth." As the result of that commercial, because there was no tape in those days and we had to do it every day, we sold more Remington shavers in Wilkins in the month of December than the whole city of Cleveland did in a year. Remington told us that.

They learned production by trial and error. Sometimes the errors were memorable.

> Deep french-fryers were brand-new, home french-fryers. They sold for like $19.95. We would actually cook food in the studio and pass it out to the studio audience. And I had trouble cooking this food ahead of time because it would throw a blue haze in the studio, so I had to go out on the fire escape and french-fry the chicken and the french-fried potatoes that in fifteen minutes we would be serving to the audience in the studio.

Doing commercials creatively required ingenuity. Stevenson related an example of one device he invented for showing products:

> We only had two cameras, so what we developed for commercials was what we called a TIX box. I got a patent on it. We were able to do, in those days, optically, what they're doing electronically today, like a dissolve. And since you didn't have time to get a camera from here to there, this TIX box was made of what we knew as a Chinese mirror. A Chinese mirror looks like a mirror until you put

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> a light behind it, and then it becomes a glass. You can see right through it. So we built a whole system of lights into this TIX box. It was about thirty-six inches square. A camera would roll right in there, and we had something that was reflecting on the mirror over here and something waiting to go on the minute you slid the mirror—the camera didn't have to move, so we made double duty of a camera in those days basically for commercials. Or we had our heavy lights in there and you could do a dissolve if you threw a rheostat.

Thus they learned to do standard television transitions, wipes, and dissolves. "It was what we do electronically today, or started some years ago to do electronically," said Jack Mitchell. "It was actually what you call a wipe from one picture to another, where there's a frame there and all of a sudden the frame disappears, and as it disappears another picture comes into being. And they did that with a box with pulling mirrors." They were inventing the grammar of television and adapting what was known from other media to the new medium of television. Bob Stevenson recalled:

> I used to be in the display business way back, in the sign business, and I was an artist. And once I knew what the cameras could do I figured out a lot of boxes. One was for diamonds. Just imagine, a camera had to roll in on a diamond ring, so we built a box for that, so the camera would get in there and the lights would all be built into the box, because you'd go crazy trying to light a diamond. And you only have two seconds to get it on. The camera would just wheel around, focus, we would go off one ring, and then we slid another ring in on a big sliding board built into the box to throw another ring in there. It was a pretty big business.

It was indeed, for The Wilkins Amateur Hour lasted until 1957, when other stations came to Pittsburgh and the challenge of competition caused KDKA to look to newer, more modern programs. Dick Pack remembered canceling what he called "outmoded, dinosaur programming" in order to compete with the two other stations that would begin broadcasting in the late 1950s.

The success of The Wilkins Amateur Hour led to other productions for Wilkins, and to other creative production techniques for Stevenson.

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> Because we were successful with the Amateur Hour we proceeded to buy five half-hours through the week called the "EZ Ranch Gals." And that was so successful that we bought an additional fifteen minutes on Saturday night called "Memory Melodies." It was like a fifteen-minute Hit Parade. So I had seven shows on the air, one every day of the week.

One of the more creative approaches to television was a deal Stevenson made with Eddie Arnold, the noted country-and-western singer, who had started a film series of his own. Stevenson said Wilkins bought the film series, "but we worked a deal with him that he would do commercials for us."

> And I went down to Nashville, got the commercials. But I also had him sit under a tree and sing with his guitar and used him in silhouette, like over the shoulder silhouette. This was 16 mm film. Brought that back and one of our girls, Dusty, had a perfect voice for duets with him. So we would now get an Eddie Arnold record, play it from the control room, he was strumming his guitar, you couldn't naturally see his voice, you could see Dusty singing to him, the camera was right on her, and we had duets with Dusty and Eddie Arnold that were fabulous. When we bought the show, we wanted complete rights to use him any way we wanted, so what we would do was cut his show up. Instead of taking it—a fifteen-minute show—the way he originally did it, we would take it by tunes. And then we would throw in a Dusty duet, and then throw in Eddie Arnold doing a commercial, so it was almost like he was doing it for Wilkins. It wasn't like we were buying a show.

Buying a show eventually became too expensive, so at the end of the decade Wilkins got out of television production.

> We were buying time like that through probably '59 or '60, I guess around in there. And we went off television then about '60. There were additional stations on the air then. Cost went out of sight. You couldn't afford to buy an hour anymore. There were so many sets in use then, and so we could not put on the shows as we did, so we got off television. It must have been about that time that we started buying spots. But we bought them seasonally because in the

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jewelry business you do all your business in December, where here we were doing it completely throughout the year.

The Wilkins productions were typical of the first television programs. Advertising agencies provided both the revenue and much of the knowledge needed to put the programs on the air. Thus the agencies exercised enormous control. Jacques Kahn began his career with Warner Brothers Theaters in Pittsburgh in the mid-1930s, moving up the ranks to become advertising director by the time television arrived. WDTV was hungry for opportunities to fill time, Kahn said. Agencies were a main source of revenue for early television in Pittsburgh and had a high level of involvement in programming, just as they did on the network level.[21] Pittsburgh at the time was the third largest corporate headquarters in the United States, and television was eager to tap that source of income. "Do you think they were hungry to get U.S. Steel on?" asked Kahn.

> Do you think Mellon Bank, Westinghouse, and H. J. Heinz aren't going to have an influence on a station that's just starting out with an experimental, calculated risk? Certainly. If they hadn't, it wouldn't have been good business. I'm not knocking it. It made good sense. If you can get your overhead locked in, your rent paid by two or three corporations, those corporations are going to have something to say.

The television practice of allowing ad agencies to buy and control programs replicated network radio in the 1930s. The practice was too tempting to refuse. Kahn explained how it worked:

> You go in and you negotiate and say you want so much for a spot. How'd you like to sell a whole hour? The sales department's all excited and you buy a one-hour segment. You could either put your own programming in or they would work with you in developing the program, but you went out and you did your own sales at your own rates. If it cost you a thousand dollars for the thing, you might sell it for three thousand dollars.

The practice soon ended, when the television sales department realized they could make more money selling directly. "It backfired on the stations, because how'd you like to be the station salesman going out and asking $50

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a spot if the agency decided they were going to put more spots in and sell them for $30 a spot to compete with you?" But while the agencies could buy whole blocks of time, they had control and often hired their own performers and directors to produce programs their way. "We controlled the content," said Kahn. "We controlled the price. We controlled everything."

The arrival of local television production in Pittsburgh brought multiple opportunities for local involvement at many levels. "It was a great opportunity for promotion people, for advertising agencies," Kahn said, "because advertising agencies were the source immediately, and those who were willing to gamble on TV at the beginning became favorite sons of the new TV stations." Rita Gould concurred that local television was a great opportunity at the time.

> Everyone was very excited about it, but of course nobody was really knowledgeable so it was hunt and peck. There was a lot of opportunity for talented people, and we did have a lot of talented people around. I would say for the time, when you look at it now, it looks very primitive. But in those days it was local. That was a big, big thing. And I think that this is something that's been lost today because of money, because of cost. I still feel that people do like something in their own community, and I think something could be produced well today from the stations locally in the various cities, but I think the cost is prohibitive.

Examples of local involvement at WDTV abound. Some were fairly sophisticated for the time, many were quite primitive. Beginning on March 12, 1951, a program called "Happy's Party" filled the half-hour time slot at 5:15 each weekday afternoon. Happy's Party was the invention of Ida Stilley Maher, a member of the local school board who had a puppet pup named "Happy." Because the program was live, one can only guess at the content. Before she joined Bill Adler at *Television News,* Rita Gould had worked on one of the new, live shows for several weeks, a variety show, "Gimbels Shoppers Review," produced by an ad agency for a department store. Rita Gould said that it had singing, guests, fashions, different segments. The first emcee was Bill Brandt, the man who had first spun records for KDKA. Brandt remembered that the call from WDTV was the catalyst for his decision to leave radio for television. A manager at KDKA asked him, "You're sure you know what you're doing? You don't know what's going to happen with this thing." Brandt left the security of radio to be emcee of the

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Gimbels show, but was soon replaced by the agency producer, who flew in from Washington, D.C., each week to do the show. His replacement was the young Orson Bean, who would go on to achieve national television fame.

When the avant-garde humor of Orson Bean created a flurry of negative reaction with the Pittsburgh audience, he too was replaced on the agency-produced Gimbels Shoppers Review, while Brandt went on to do a program that the station produced, beginning in September 1951, called "Studio Control," a variety program at 9:00 A.M. Eleanor Schano remembered that the set for Studio Control was quite simple.

> A couple of folding chairs where they had a very small audience and a little counter that looked like a kitchen counter, and a little sign in the back that said "The Bill Brandt Show," and everything else. You just brought in your little props that you used, and that's all there was.

Two other local programs followed: Kay's Kitchen, a cooking program in the manner of the KDKA radio cooking program, and Home Edition, hosted by Jean Sladden. Sladden had been a schoolteacher and a newspaper reporter, who first worked in WDTV's traffic department. *TV Digest* described Home Edition as presenting "fashions, feature stories, club news and shopping tips."[22]

In those days the set for each program was against a studio wall; the camera simply moved from one set to another. Jack Mitchell remembers the studio as being about twenty feet high and fifty feet square. The studio had three cameras (one for a spare), DuMont cameras that were big and bulky and had four lenses. Mitchell said the camera operator would change each lens by turning a handle in the back.

> He'd squeeze the handle and then make the turret turn till it latched. Then he'd release it. Oftentimes you'd see that on the air, if the director didn't have them change lenses quickly enough. The director had a hard job then, because he not only directed the cameras and the technical director to take the picture, whether it be camera or slide or film, but also had to tell the cameraman which lens to use, because we had people that never saw a camera before coming into those studios. We had to teach them all, it seems to me. They didn't even have any photographic experience. And we had to teach ourselves at the same time, because we'd never seen a

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> camera either. There were two or three of us that went to New York because we were the early people at the television station, and we learned how to use those cameras so we could tell the other people how.

The early days of live television produced anecdotes that matched those of live radio. Bill Brandt was doing Studio Control one morning when a police officer appeared just off the set, to arrest Brandt for unpaid parking tickets. In the casual manner of live television, Brandt walked over, with the camera following.

> He had an affidavit for my arrest. He read it to me and it said: "Deliver the body of William A. Brandt to the courthouse of Allegheny County." It was a very official document. And I said, "Well, why don't you come in and sit with me and we'll wait for him to appear." He sat there the whole show and then it suddenly dawned on him who I was.

When the story appeared on the front page of the newspaper, it was suggested that it was all planned. "It really wasn't," said Brandt, "because I had no idea what that guy was doing there. Just seeking something to liven up the show."

Nick Perry was doing a live commercial for something called "steepulator coffee," which consisted of coffee in bags, similar to tea bags. The lids were difficult to remove because the product was vacuum-packed, and when Perry couldn't locate the pre-loosened jar, he spent nearly three minutes of what was supposed to be a one-minute commercial trying jar after jar until he found the one he could open. When he left the set, he was sure they had lost the account. The next day he learned that the sponsor had indeed canceled, but not because of the botched commercial. It seems that after the coffee commercial the live musical combo had played "Tea for Two."

Bill Hinds spoke of the elaborate productions that went on in the studios. On one program he was to enter the set in a specially constructed rowboat while someone sang "Slow Boat to China"; a stagehand would push the boat gently while Hinds rowed. After his entry Hinds was to do a live commercial, but the stagehand did not push gently and the boat shot across the set and through the scenery and broke apart, leaving Hinds on the floor. He managed to finish the commercial, amid the laughter of the crew. His fears that they would lose the sponsor or, worse, that he would lose his job were

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allayed by a telephone call from the sponsor asking if they could show the scene again the next night because it was so funny. But of course they could not—there was no tape or film of the show, for this was live television.

The expanding number of local programs led to a lengthened broadcast day, which in turn created the need for more "inventory"—programs that would attract a growing number of sponsors and satisfy the increasing television audience. This led to the decision to keep WDTV on the air twenty-four hours a day. Sales Manager Larry Israel said that he received more and more calls from viewers who did not get home from work until WDTV had signed off the air. "People would say, 'I get home from work late and I can't see those movies. I'd like to see some of those movies.' And I said to the fellows, 'Look, we can expand our whole program day. Pittsburgh is a swing-shift town.' " (At the time a quarter of a million quit work at midnight in Pittsburgh.) "I said, 'We have these [film] libraries. All we have to do is run them some more.' " The production cost would be minimal. "I remember trying to calculate the cost of the studio. I had a terrible time justifying this because they said, 'Well, how're you going to justify your people and your crew?' I said, 'All we need is a projector and one engineer that will run these things.' " So in March 1952 WDTV began "Swing Shift Theater" and became the nation's first twenty-four-hour television station.

The ability to produce their own programs, the fact that they now had a studio, and the need for more programming produced a flurry of local programs at WDTV as a growing staff learned to do live television. During those first two years of production capability, television news began to take shape. It was still radio news, as radio news was practiced at the time, with some visuals added. The sources for news were official sources, by way of newspapers and wire services. There was little attempt to gather the news. The emphasis was on news presentation utilizing a growing knowledge of studio techniques to give the news a television "look."

Out of those early efforts the staff of WDTV would begin to expand local newscasts. A major new effort toward what would begin to look more like today's television news would begin during the second year of production capability at WDTV with a newscast called "The World Tonight."

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4 News at Eleven

"The World Tonight"

During the second week of August 1952 an ad in Pittsburgh's *TV Digest* announced: "Fort Pitt Brewing Company has started a nightly newscast, 'The World Tonight,' at eleven o'clock, with Dave Murray and Ray Scott doing the reporting. Late news recorded on movie film and wire photos will be used." And so on Monday night, August 11, WDTV took a significant step forward in local television news with a fifteen-minute newscast at 11:00 P.M. Although "The World Tonight" was sponsored by one company, in the manner of advertising agency newscasts, it was produced and controlled entirely by WDTV personnel.

Local production continued to increase as the station expanded its staff. By that time Harold Lund had replaced Don Stewart as general manager, bringing to WDTV an increased concern for public relations and community service. The arrival of Donovan Faust as assistant general manager in May 1951 signaled an expansion of local news, leading to The World Tonight, the first major newscast. Faust came to Pittsburgh from Dayton,

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Ohio, and soon brought Dave Murray with him to be WDTV's first news director. Reflecting on Faust's intentions regarding news, Murray said:

> I think his agenda here included getting station people—that is, people that were paid and employed by the station to do and put together news. There were an awful lot of people who worked for advertisers, good announcers, who would come in and rip off whatever they thought was the best thing to say and read it, with no station guidance at all.

Faust saw news as more than a way to fill television time, and he began to build a staff to form a news operation.

Faust was a veteran broadcaster whose career stretched back to his college radio station at Purdue University, where he had been an agricultural student. The first program he did was called "Farm Facts for Farm Folks with Faust." From that modest beginning he went on to radio stations in Cincinnati, then to Washington, D.C., where he was involved with national news, and to WXYZ radio in Detroit, where he was both announcer and radio actor. He became the second person to play the lead role on "The Green Hornet," which along with The Lone Ranger, was a nationwide broadcast success. (The person who originated the role of the Green Hornet was Al Hodges, who would later originate the role of Captain Video on the DuMont television network.) Live radio drama gave Faust considerable experience with live production. He said that the way live shows were produced on WXYZ was typical of radio production in those days.

> The rehearsal was invariably at 3:45 in the afternoon, and you did a couple of read-throughs and a dress. Then the initial program was on at various times; it was usually at 7:30. And then you did a West Coast repeat at 10:30. At one point we did three: 6:30, 7:30, and 10:30. But yes, they were live.

Donovan Faust knew live broadcast production intimately from his days in radio, and he brought that knowledge to live television.

Faust left Detroit in 1944 to get involved in television in Chicago. There he continued to work in radio to support himself while he worked in television for two years as a volunteer in order to learn the new medium. In Chicago he did his first television news.

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> The station obviously lost money because there was no revenue coming in. So there was no news wire service, there were no reporters, there was no anything. You stole from the papers and you put together some kind of a newscast. And generally it was partially ad-libbed, and that happened to be still during the war. So we picked up a couple of maps and I would draw arrows on the maps where the armies were moving and that type of thing. It was a very simple thing, believe me.

In those early days, there were few experts in local television. Even with his limited experience in television, Faust was considered to be enough of an expert to be invited to St. Louis as a consultant, where he helped train the staff to put the nation's tenth television station on the air. Then it was on to Dayton, Ohio, as program director. In May 1951 Don Faust moved to WDTV as assistant general manager, which in those early days meant being responsible for everything that wasn't sales. As sales increased, more programs for clients to sponsor were needed. One type of program being neglected was news, and Faust looked to radio's traditional 11:00 P.M. slot to begin a major newscast. The announcer chosen to be the first reporter was the person he'd brought with him from Dayton, Dave Murray.

Dave Murray spent his life in broadcasting. After getting out of the Navy in 1946, he worked at a small station in Covington, Kentucky, then moved across the Ohio River to Cincinnati, where he worked at WKRC, which would later be the prototype of the television series, "WKRP in Cincinnati." WKRC—"the real one," said Murray—"was owned by the Taft family and they had the *Cincinnati Times Star* at that time, so it was a news-oriented station." Murray went to New York for a summer course at "just a nuts-and-bolts trade school, as 'This is a camera, these are the lenses,'" then to Dayton as a director and announcer. He confessed that he didn't own a television set the two years he worked in Dayton. Then it was on to Pittsburgh, where Faust hired him as the station's first news director.

When he got to WDTV, Murray found a little room that was the newsroom. "Two people could barely turn around. It had all the trappings in one corner of a newspaper wire photo room." They were using still photos for the news, obtained from a primitive wire device. "You had to physically put the thing on the spindle. It would go round, put it in the developer, put it in the fix, mount it and take a picture of it. But it was still better than looking at someone's face for five minutes." The newscasts were all five minutes long, tacked onto the end of a live program that was shortened to

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twenty-five minutes or a film show that had been cut down. At first Murray was just an additional announcer who read news in the established format. WDTV did a five-minute newscast in the morning following the *Today* show and a ten-minute program at noon. By May 1952 a five-minute newscast had been added at 11:00 P.M.

Then came the fifteen-minute World News Tonight. The staff that got the major new effort on the air, including the technical crew, consisted of some twenty-two people. "We put together a newscast that was probably not as good as in cities where there was a competitive situation, but it wasn't bad. I did the news," Murray said, "and Ray Scott did the sports." Ray Scott, who would later achieve fame as a network sportscaster, had started his career on radio in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. After the war, Scott moved to Pittsburgh to work at WCAE radio as a staff announcer. When television came along, he quit radio, because of the reluctance of radio stations to let their announcers do television. When he went to an advertising agency to find freelance radio or television work, he discovered that they had a television department and were looking for help. "And that's how I got the glorified title of assistant radio-television director, although I knew nothing about television." But few people knew anything about television then. As Scott put it, "One advantage, you were seldom talking with an expert." During his two years with the agency, it was Ray Scott who had hired Ed Wood to do the Chevrolet-sponsored news. Then, with the 11:00 P.M. newscast on WDTV, Scott became sports director, working with Dave Murray.

The World Tonight was sponsored entirely by the Fort Pitt Brewing Company, but it marked a sharp departure from the agency-controlled newscast, for The World Tonight was controlled by the station, not the advertising agency. Whereas Ed Wood was an employee of the agency for his news for Chevrolet, Murray, Scott, and the show's director, Jack Tolan, were employed by WDTV. It also marked an advancement over the simple five-minute rip-and-read news summaries that had characterized earlier newscasts on WDTV. Now more effort would be devoted to gathering and processing the news rather than just reading copy from the wire, and more effort to add video. This new venture was a significant attempt to go beyond just "radio with pictures" and to fashion a newscast in a form that was more suitable to the medium of television. The 11:00 P.M. time slot had long been a standard slot for an extended newscast on radio, so there was a built-in audience expectation for a longer, fifteen-minute newscast at that time. The management of WDTV hoped to move that audience from radio to television.

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Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn was the ad agency for the Fort Pitt Brewing Company. It had two people who were experienced at television: Saul Rosenzweig, director of television for the agency, had been co-producer of The Betty Crocker Show in New York for three years before coming to Pittsburgh; Jim Gallivan had worked in television in Minneapolis. The experience of these two men would be useful to The World Tonight, but in producing commercials rather than having input into the news itself. Because the commercials were live, each was itself a major production requiring planning and rehearsal. Sportscaster Ray Scott did the beer commercials, moving from his sports desk to an area nearby. "They were live, and in those days you were permitted to drink beer on the air," Dave Murray said. "They rehearsed, so the sportscaster could get pretty happy by the time the program went on at 11:00." Scott contends that he only sipped the beer, and that even that practice soon ended. But the commercials were serious business. "Great care and attention was given to the lighting on the set and the glass as the beer was poured into it," Murray noted. There was no prompter, so the sportscaster either had to memorize the copy or use camera cards held by a stagehand. Eventually, Murray said, they began to put commercials on film, something that Pitt Parade had done out of necessity from the beginning. "It finally occurred to some agency man, why pour the beer every night and run the risk of it overflowing the glass when we can pour it perfectly and use the film over and over again?" Murray added that it was a breakthrough.

As they adapted the news process to a new medium, breakthroughs came rapidly. The first consideration, since it was a visual medium and the reporter was now on camera, was a news set. The first set was an example of borrowing from theater. "It was flat in the theatrical-stage sense," Murray remembered, "with a thing behind held up with a sand bag. They weren't in color. The set designers worked in black and white because the picture was black and white." Asked who the set designers were, Murray answered: "Well, there was a couple of artists, scene painters, on the staff at WDTV, and they put it together. Ours was probably typical. It had a globe, bookshelves, and, creeping up underneath, a few ferns and potted plants." Murray thought that the purpose of the set was both aesthetic and practical.

> I guess you'd call it office atmosphere that softened to a kind of a study. Why the desk? How about a chair, a coffee table? No, the desk was, I think, authoritative. It not only gave the audience the

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> impression that this was someone who was authoritative, but I think it helped the nervous newscaster to the extent that he had something to hide behind.

They were called "newscasters" at the time. Although Sig Mickelson, president of CBS, would coin the term "anchorman" to refer to Walter Cronkite at the political conventions of 1952, about the time The World Tonight went on the air, it would be a while before the word "anchor" spread throughout the television industry.[1] Dave Murray did more than just read the news. He was actively involved in every aspect of the newsroom operation—he had to be, for there was no other staff. Today a television newsroom has assignment editors, producers, photographers, news writers, production assistants, videotape editors, an executive producer, and a news director. Murray had all the functions that would eventually splinter into the specialized jobs of many people.

> I was the guy who read the news and I was the news director. In other words, the staff was zilch. One guy came over named George Thomas who had a newspaper background, but had worked a little bit as an intern with CBS to the point where he had actually seen the Douglas Edwards news program. This was the CBS early evening news, which wasn't even carried here at the time.

George Thomas joined WDTV three months after the inaugural broadcast of The World Tonight. "I was the first off-air employee. They tagged me news editor. I was there as the whole department." Actually, his newspaper background was brief. Thomas had gone to New York to study newspaper journalism at Columbia University. When someone asked if anyone was interested in television news, Thomas and another classmate volunteered, and got to spend a couple of nights a week at CBS as apprentices. The classmate stayed at CBS and eventually became a senior producer for Sixty Minutes. Thomas returned home to Pittsburgh. When WDTV had no openings, he took a job as a reporter for the *Pittsburgh Press* in June 1951, but that fall he lost his job to a veteran returned from Korea. He channeled his fascination with television into selling sets. "Here I was with two degrees in journalism lugging TV sets, but there were no jobs around Pittsburgh anyhow." Then in November he got a call from WDTV telling him they were ready to expand the news department.

There were several news sources for The World Tonight—some the

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traditional ones from previous news programs, some additional sources. There was the standard wire service, of course, and the police radio. "I would get there in the morning at eight and I had to clear the wire first of all," Thomas said.

> I had worked for International News Service after high school, and all during my college days at Waynesburg I had worked for a small weekly [newspaper]. I did odds and ends. I was a correspondent for International News Service, the Hearst thing. So I knew the wires, I knew how to work them. And of course my work at Columbia, which was excellent. So I cleared the wires, I would monitor the police radio. I was alone in the newsroom from 8:00 to 11:30 A.M. I prepared the noon news.

Neighborhood News—the noon news—which now featured Nick Perry and Dave Murray, continued after the station had initiated The World Tonight. Except for the local segment, Thomas had the news ready by 11:30 A.M., when a reporter would come in, call the newspaper's city desk, and take notes. Newspapers were a primary news source, except that now the paper was getting credit instead of being stolen from. An item in *TV Digest* for August 23, 1952, noted: "The *Post-Gazette* is furnishing Dave Murray and Ray Scott with their local news on Fort Pitt Beer's The World Tonight every weekday evening at 11:00."[2] Thus there were the standard news sources: the wire, the police radio, and the newspaper. Murray said that George Thomas, with his experience in newspapers and wire services, helped expand news sources. "He was used to checking his sources, to double-checking them, to contacting some people that we might not ordinarily bother with, such as police and fire departments and things like that."

The search for visuals, however, would lead to more local news-gathering. At first the attempt to use visuals looked to outside sources for pictures. Still pictures were sent over a telephone wire. Thomas described the process.

> This voice would come over this machine and the man would say, "Here's a picture of the President lighting the Christmas tree," or whatever. And "Do you want it?" If you wanted it, you had to load a piece of paper, 8 by 10, in this machine, then they send down a beep where you had to synchronize it on your machine with their signal, turn these knobs, and then it'd be seven minutes later. You had to go back in, turn the lights out, take the paper out, and put it

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> in the soup, like a photograph. You had to process it in the developer, the soup, the wash, and then the dryer.

The still pictures were displayed on the air on an easel. "You put it on an easel card. On a card, then on an easel, and the camera would dolly up to it, focus, and that's how you'd do it."

There was also film. At first all the film came from an outside source. The station subscribed to a national film service. "I think it was a Movietone package, some supplier like that," Dave Murray remembered.

> That would require a trip to the airport, to pick it up. It would be shipped out of two locations at that point, New York and Washington. And you'd get two little bundles of film, a little rundown on what the stories were, and you'd put that together. When I said put it together, what it would be would be physically one roll of 16 mm film with leader in between. And the way it worked, you'd cue it up to the first story on the projector. When it got to a piece of white leader, the projectionist would stop it, cue it up to the next one.

Murray added that eventually they used taxis to bring the film from the airport, but "at first we didn't trust anyone except our own employees to go out there, stand by the airplane, and grab it as soon as it came off."

The film flown in from New York and Washington consisted of national news stories. Because The World Tonight had no competition, either from the networks or from other local stations, it could use whatever stories it wanted. News Director Murray said: "It was strictly a question of news judgment. What's good today and you'd lead national or local." He added that the film was all silent to begin with, but that gradually some of the film stories were complete with sound—"especially of things that could be pre-set, political things or something like that, somebody standing on the capitol steps." The national film service was working on its own news standards.

> It started out pretty soft, but they soon got into it hot and heavy. I mean, they had a regular Washington bureau, for instance, an Eisenhower news conference.[3] Sure, you got that, you might not want all of it, but big spot-breaking stuff, major disasters, catastrophes, hurricanes, ships sinking, whatever.

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George Thomas said he learned during his apprenticeship at CBS to "think pictures." But WDTV had no staff photographers, so Thomas improvised:

> There was an engineer and a lighting technician [Fred Lewis] who had his own Bolex camera. And when I'd hear a fire on the police radio—and by the way, in the early days the only radio they would give me was one where you heard the dispatcher, not the answer—so the dispatcher would say, "Car so and so, go to so and so, fire reported," but you couldn't hear whatever clues to see if it was a bad fire, so let's say it was a fire of some significance. I would then call engineering and say, "Could I borrow Fred Lewis?"—the engineer-photographer. And they'd say okay. If he was adjusting lights he'd come down off the ladder. Then I'd call a cab, because we had no mobile units, and tell the cab to take us to so and so. Sometimes there'd be a twenty-minute wait for a cab. So we'd get there as they were winding up the hoses, and as we approached in a cab, the police would stop us at the fire hoses, and we'd have to hang a camera out the window and say, "Television news." And they'd say, "What?" "Television news." "Oh, okay." It was funny. We got there frequently when they were rolling up the hoses. So we'd shoot aftermaths, always aftermaths.

Dave Murray said he sometimes accompanied Fred Lewis, and with the quest for film, television reporters went into the field. Getting the film on the air was no simple matter. Murray said the station had no developing facility, so the film had to be sent to a local lab for processing, then delivered to the station by messenger.

> We were on the second floor of the Chamber of Commerce Building. It was a long walk up, so we would just open the window. The messenger would pull up to the curb and throw the film through the window. We'd catch it. We got a couple of rewinds, a little viewer, footage counter, and a splicer and we were in business. Everybody turned into an instant film editor without the slightest idea of what he was doing. Nobody wore gloves. It was dirty and dusty. There were scratches all over the film by the time it got on the air. Fingerprints. But it was a moving picture. It was a start.

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Murray said that at first they'd pick one story to film, then maybe two. It was strictly silent film, so the newscaster would narrate the story, voice-over, watching a nearby monitor. With the arrival of sound film the narration was a bit more complicated. Murray described the process:

> You had previewed the film. No A and B rolls where you had the voice-over on one and the video on the other, and then the director rolled both. That was much too complex for the directors. Besides, it would have tied up two whole projectors when they were already cuing up the movie for 11:15. So you would time the copy out and people got pretty darn good at it. Having seen what was taking place just before the President spoke, let's say, you'd just shut up and they'd turn the sound up and use it on the same reel. There was a lot of ad-libbing. If you knew your subject—let's say a local thing you had covered—you could just scribble some things down and go from the monitor and watch it. And fairly smoothly by today's standards, where everything is prerecorded. It would sound a little sloppy, but not a lot.

Ray Scott did sports entirely by ad-lib. "I never worked from an exact script. I'd make notes, I'd just give him [the director] the cue line. I never to this day worked with an exact script. I didn't want to. I felt much more comfortable ad-libbing."

This practice resulted in a newscast that was not always smooth. As Murray attested, sometimes the timing was off, "and when the film ran out, quite often you'd get a blank space before they tipped the camera back in the studio." When the film was silent, Thomas said, "we always played music."

> A director, a good director was one who could pick a good mood piece, a fire thing, and they had them all—they had all these numbers. Fire would be 132B, and so forth. It was played on the disc in the control room. The sound man had this in front of him, back of fire film, play so and so, back of crowning May Queen, play so and so, and what have you.

Although the outtakes were discarded, they kept the news film that was used on the air so it could be looked up and used again for updates of some stories, a practice that continued in television news from that time on.

Technology limited attempts to make the news more visually oriented.

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There were no trucks available to do live remotes, but the impulse was there. George Eisenhauer cited one instance when WDTV got live pictures of a fire: "I remember literally putting a camera out the window of the studio in the Chamber of Commerce Building to cover a fire across the street at the Bell Telephone Building." The incentive to get pictures came with the nature of the medium. "It was something television could do," Eisenhauer said. "It just evolved." Once the search for visuals began, it would gain momentum. To "Think Pictures," as the sign above George Thomas's desk proclaimed, seemed entirely right and natural. The conventions of what pictures to get and how to get them originated in the formative, early years of television news. When asked if "a lot of the forms, conventions, and traditions" had been established by the time he left WDTV in 1953, Dave Murray replied: "Yes, they were there. And remain to this day."

It is ironic that while the use of local film was evolving on WDTV's major newscast, Pitt Parade continued to produce a ten-minute news program entirely on film. As Murray put it, "A beautiful marriage could have been made there instantly between the people at the station who were trying to get the news shaped up and the Packaged Program people, who were putting out a little newsreel." A merger of the two would have resulted in a live local newscast replete with film. The opportunity to skip steps in the evolution of television news was there, but obvious only in retrospect. In those early days, television news was not considered a profitable venture. The historical process would keep the two apart until Pitt Parade ceased production after a decade and other stations hired its staff of photographers and editors.

Nearly two decades later, when television discovered that local news could be a primary source of revenue, management began to spend money on equipment and an expanded staff. In the formative years, news had not been seen as a moneymaker mainly for two reasons, both based on tradition. First, radio had always done news on a sustaining basis—that is, unsponsored—so it simply did not occur to station owners that they might make money on the news. Unsponsored news, it was believed, demonstrated that newscasts were free of commercial bias and presented as a service to the community. It was a way to satisfy the FCC that the programming was in the "public interest, convenience, and necessity." So stations bore whatever cost was involved, and expenses were kept to a minimum. News was habitually thought of as a service, not a profit-maker. Second, in the tradition of broadcast economics, again inherited from radio, clients bought

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a block of time to produce their own program, or bought exclusive rights to a program the station would produce. Later, spot commercials would allow a station to tap the resources of several clients and thereby expand the revenue produced by their programs. But in those days it was far more profitable to let an advertising agency pay for producing a newscast than to have the station pick up the tab. As news director, Dave Murray felt the economic constraint:

> It was an expense to the station to maintain these however limited facilities. And I got the impression that management moaned and groaned about it. "Gee," said the sales manager, "why are we going to put that on? It's going to cost us money. I can sell the entire thing free and clear and we don't need to bend a finger."

The opportunity to increase profits was a factor in shaping the form of the news. At first The World Tonight was sponsored entirely by Fort Pitt Brewing. The only segments were determined by the news form—four segments, broken by three commercials. "In other words," Murray said, "we had, let's say, News A, a commercial break, News B. The headline format was in vogue in radio at the time. So you'd do a little bit and say, 'More in a moment,' and then the commercials interspersed and then, 'Now here's Ray with the sports.'" Ray Scott did radio play-by-play of the University of Pittsburgh football games and was considered strictly a "sports reporter," so his segment was kept separate from the "news." Because the radio tradition was to place sports news at the end of a newscast, it was natural to have sports as the last segment on The World Tonight. Murray believed the sports segment was prominent for two reasons:

> First of all it was visually exciting. All of a sudden Pitt is playing Notre Dame. You've got movies of it and you can put them on television. Somebody's in a diving contest. You've got track and field. All of that emotion was available on a daily basis. The second reason would be that it stretched your newscast into a fifteen-minute format when perhaps you only had ten minutes of worthwhile stuff.

But The World Tonight, with news and sports, was at first an intact entity sold to one sponsor. That was in keeping with the tradition of broadcast economics.

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When the sales department realized it could sell three segments—news, sports, and weather—each to a different sponsor, that changed. The station could thus earn more for what amounted to three programs than it could earn for one. Murray had a theory about how the psychology of dividing the news into three segments appealed to sponsors:

> When you got into the nitty-gritty stuff—let's say a real violent labor situation, where you saw a cop hit somebody over the head with a club, or you saw some blood on the sidewalk after a robbery, or a shootout, or a terrible fire—I think a lot of sponsors would say "Nobody wants to see that" and were afraid of offending people being associated with a hard newscast. A lot of people liked the sports, but your blue-chip advertisers, such as Duquesne Light, gravitated to the weather because it was noncontroversial. It could be merchandised and promoted to the extent that if you want this free pamphlet about weather facts and phenomenon, write to the Duquesne Light Company. And it became a nice little thing.

George Thomas recalled how the weather became the first segment to be split off for a separate sponsor:

> We always had thirty seconds or a minute of weather on the fifteen-minute show. I remember being called into the program manager's office. He said, "We're not going to do 15 minutes of news, weather, and sports as a package anymore. We've told the brewing company we're going to give them ten minutes of news. And we're selling the weather as a separate entity. So you will be on the air. You will give local, district, national, international news, and sports from 11:00 till 11:09:30. We're going to sell the thirty-second spot to 11:10. We're going to sell weather for four and a half minutes, and another thirty-second spot from 11:14:30 to 11:15, and then we start our movie. This will make the station $250,000 more a year." How do you argue with him?

With the weather now a separate segment and sponsored by a different client, it was no longer sufficient to have the newscaster give a brief account of tomorrow's weather. So the television "meteorologist" was born. They were not meteorologists, of course, but "performers," not even thought of as reporters. And they were usually women, "a weather lady," as Dave

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Murray put it, recalling that considerable attention was devoted to selecting the person to do the weather. "Quite often it was a woman who did the weather—you got a pretty girl on the tube. Usually the newscaster was a man, and so was the sportscaster. And everybody was white—no black faces."

Eleanor Schano was one of the "weather ladies" on WDTV. She had "modeled" her way through college and soon began to do filmed commercials for Pitt Parade. "It was a rather normal progression that if you were a model in town you were called on to do a television modeling job," she recalled. The year was 1950, when you had to walk to the hardware store down the street to watch television, but she fell in love with television:

> So I went marching back up to Duquesne University and changed my major. I decided then and there that I was going to become a news journalist. Wow, was that a joke in 1950 if you were a female person! There was absolutely no opportunity for women, and I could not see anywhere down the line that there would be. But I decided that I loved it and that I was going to start to write, and I was going to be ready if the time ever came.

The time did come, and it came through the live commercials on WDTV.

> Now I'm going to college every day. I'm running up the block and going to classes and working these little things [live commercials] in, twenty-four spots a week. I didn't start in the little radio or television station making thirty-five bucks a week. I was making two to three hundred dollars a week.

The standard procedure for live commercials was for the model to appear on camera while a staff announcer described what she was wearing. Schano decided she could do the narration better. Her experience typifies the kind of assertiveness a woman who wanted to break into television needed to have.

The advertising agency for Schano's commercials was the Jay Rich agency.

> I left the studio and walked right over to the Frick Building and up to the eleventh floor and said, "Is Mr. Rich in?" "Yes, he is. Who's calling?" "My name is Eleanor Schano." "May I ask what this is in

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> reference to?" "Yes, it's about his television commercials that I'm doing and I think he's making a big mistake." "Well, if you'll wait for a moment maybe Mr. Rich will see you." I went in and he was sitting behind this enormous desk, smoking this enormous pipe, and I said, "Mr. Rich, my name is Eleanor Schano and I have been doing your commercials, and I think you're making a terrible mistake. If you really want to sell these things you would let me talk about them. Why have the man in the booth describe what I'm wearing and I'm pointing and I feel kind of silly. If you let me talk about it, I know I can sell lots of stuff for you." He puffed on his pipe for a minute and said, "You know, I think that's a very good idea." He called a copywriter in and said, "Change this copy. Starting tomorrow on the ten o'clock in the morning spot, Eleanor is going to do it." I had never spoken a word into a microphone. I had never spoken a word before a camera in my life. So I am a nineteen-year-old undergraduate when I went on the air that day, and for the next thirty-five years never stopped talking on television.

Schano would get her own fifteen-minute, three-day-a-week show, which the station insisted on calling "The Beauty Spot." She said she worked hard to produce substantial interviews with women on important issues.

> I didn't want it to be The Beauty Spot, I didn't want it to be fluff and frivolous. But again, I tell you this story because it shows you what their mind-set was: We have a woman doing this and it has to be The Beauty Spot. We can't call this "Women of the 50s."

That mind-set resulted in Schano's becoming a "weather lady."

Television did not hire meteorologists, Murray said, at least not at WDTV. "They were announcers who, I guess, read a book or went out to the weather bureau and saw for the first time the isobars and the charts and said, 'Oh, is that how you do it?'" He described the first weather set: "I think mostly it was a sign with the sponsor's name on it, and a blackboard at the beginning. Pretty soon they got to an acetate overlay, a map of the country with a marking pen." They got their weather information by calling the National Weather Service. Schano said:

> I'd call them and they would say, "There's a high pressure system over Montana and there's a low pressure system down in Alabama.

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> There's a cold front moving here." And then I would draw my own little picture on my own little piece of paper. Then I had a little map and I would take my little drawing and I'd put it on the map with a magic marker and then you could wash it off. And we had little things that had a sticky backing that would say Fair, Cold, Low. And then we had our little numbers and you'd put them up there. It got the job done.

The weather segment followed a commercial break on The World Tonight. "It was a self-contained little show," Schano said:

> The weather with its own little opening, in the early days it was [announced by] the booth announcer. Then we got kind of sophisticated and we would have that prerecorded, with music and the whole thing. I would do my opening. I would do the first part of the weather. "And now we'll be back with the forecast right after this. But first come with me." If I needed you to come with me, you came with me, and that meant the camera came with me: "Come over here." My commercial set would be an ironing board, and they worked very well in the early days of television because you can just fold it up and put it against the wall. And when you fold it out it gives you a nice long surface and you can put all your props on there. And so, "Come with me and let me tell you about this wonderful Welch's Grape Juice." And I'd pour the grape juice and I'd drink it, and hope I didn't choke.

There was an issue of what the "weather lady" would wear, according to Dave Murray. "As I recall, that probably was a point of big discussion. In other words, do you want a sexy lady weathercaster? Do you want a prim school-marm type? And depending on the way the sponsor felt about it, that's usually the way it worked out. I recall a lot of suits, blouses, Dorothy Collins type blouses." Dorothy Collins was known for the prim blouses she wore when she and Snooky Lanson sang the top seven songs of the week on "Your Hit Parade," a program NBC adopted from radio and began on television the month before The World Tonight premiered. Clothes later played a role in Eleanor Schano's struggle to succeed on television as a woman. When WTAE went on the air with a rival television station in 1958, she called her old friend Dave Murray, by then news director at the new station. "Dave," she said, "I'd like to come to work for you. I would like

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very much to work in your news department." Murray replied, "Well, we don't have much of a news department. I have Herb Morrison here [the same Herb Morrison who had reported the crash of the *Hindenburg* a decade before], and I have three or four people." Instead he suggested that she come audition for the weather show Bell Telephone was about to sponsor. It was not an encouraging invitation, because Murray also told her that the telephone company wanted a male spokesperson and that twenty-eight men would also be auditioning. But she went and she got the job, even though the "ad guy" told her they were determined never to employ a woman. When she asked why, she was told: "We've found that women are just not dependable. They get sick more than men and, more than that, they get pregnant!" But they had decided to give her a try.

Schano was on the air just two months when she discovered she was pregnant. Clothes were the solution. "Fortunately, that year women were wearing boxy, Chanel kinds of jackets," Schano said. "I was more Chanel than Chanel." She managed to conceal her pregnancy until finally the sales manager asked her directly whether she was pregnant. "A little bit," she replied. The baby was due the next week. Schano worked that Friday and the baby was born the next day. She took just two weeks off, returning to tell the telephone company representative: "See, we are dependable. We might get pregnant, but by golly we are dependable." Schano represented Bell Telephone for ten more years.

The World Tonight continued with its original staff from August 1952 until July 1953, when Dave Murray moved to WENS, a newly formed UHF station in Pittsburgh. WENS was originated by Larry Israel and Donovan Faust, two of the men who had been instrumental in creating WDTV. On September 27, 1952, *TV Digest* carried an item that said: "Larry Israel, Sales Manager of WDTV, and A. Donovan Faust, Assistant General Manager of the same station, have joined with three leading Pittsburgh businessmen in forming a company to operate a television station in Pittsburgh. The application for an Ultra High Frequency channel will be filed this week."[4] WENS, channel 16, would begin broadcasting on August 31, 1953, as an ABC affiliate. The new station would not challenge WDTV's monopoly in any significant way, for although no one realized it at the time, Pittsburghers would not buy the expensive equipment necessary to receive UHF. The brief story of WENS is worth noting, for it is typical of the difficulties that UHF stations across the nation encountered.

The standards for television in the United States were set in 1941, when the FCC adopted the recommendations of the National Television Stan-

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dards Committee, establishing the VHF band as the norm. Most of the broadcasting industry at the time opposed the decision because the UHF band had some seventy channels available and the VHF band had just thirteen. (In 1952 the FCC would assign channel 1 to nonbroadcast use, keeping the original numbers, 2–13, for the twelve that remained.) But many of RCA's patents were not fully operative in the UHF portion of the spectrum, so the powerful company favored VHF. Political pressure prevailed over technological practicality. When the FCC freeze ended in 1952, there was tremendous competition for the limited number of VHF channels available.

The FCC responded to the demand by allotting licenses both to VHF, with its twelve channels, and to UHF, whose number of available channels had by then been reduced to fifty-six. A VHF assignment was more than difficult to obtain. In Pittsburgh, WCAE radio applied for channel 4 and the *Post-Gazette* applied for channel 11, even though the chance of getting a new VHF station on the air anytime soon looked appallingly slim. Licenses were awarded by lot, and FCC Commissioner Robert Jones said that Pittsburgh was number 1,237 on a list of 1,274 cities seeking licenses and that it would be about five years before viewers could watch any channel except WDTV on the VHF band. The prediction proved remarkedly on target, for channel 11 went on the air in 1957, exactly five years later, and channel 4 the following year.

The one exception to Jones's prediction was not a commercial station. The FCC had reserved about 10 percent of the available channels for noncommercial, educational use, mostly on the UHF band. In September 1953 some 10,000 campaign volunteers went door-to-door in Pittsburgh neighborhoods to gather 100,000 subscriptions at two dollars each to supplement grants of $350,000 in order to establish a community station. The FCC granted a license for channel 13, and on April 1, 1954, WQED-TV became the first community-sponsored, educational, noncommercial station in America.

This did not solve commercial television's problems, however. With the pessimistic outlook for VHF, the only hope seemed to be UHF, which was being encouraged by the FCC. But the plan the FCC had established would make it difficult for UHF stations to succeed. Rather than assign some cities entirely to VHF, and others entirely to UHF, creating a level playing field, the FCC decided to intermix the two bands in the same cities. UHF was faced with many inequities. Transmitters for UHF were more expensive, and propagation of the signal was more difficult. Also, television sets were

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equipped only to receive VHF; in order to receive a UHF channel, the consumer had to spend extra money for a converter, after making what was then a major outlay of money for the original set. Even if the consumer did purchase a converter, the devices were a nuisance—they were difficult to tune, and the picture was inferior to VHF.

With modern cable television, it is perhaps easy to forget how tenuous reception was in those early days of television broadcasting. The tentative nature of television reception is illustrated by accounts of the problems WDTV encountered when it switched from channel 3 to channel 2. The reason for the switch was co-channel interference: Huntington, West Virginia, had a station that was assigned to channel 3, and many people who lived between the two cities, even though they were 284 miles apart, had trouble getting a clear picture from either station. So on Sunday night, November 23, 1952, WDTV was allowed to switch to channel 2. Viewers had been notified to simply switch their sets from channel 3 to channel 2 the next morning.

What sounds so simple proved to be more complicated than anyone at the time anticipated. There were two primary problems. The first was with the tuning strip in home receivers. Donovan Faust described the problem: "A lot of the sets didn't even have the strips in. The manufacturer would ship them into a given area and they'd have strips in for whatever the channels were there. Another thing was that even if the strips were in there, sometimes they were corroded and didn't function." Since no one ever had to change the channel, with WDTV the only station in town, this had never occurred to anyone. Win Fanning, by then a television columnist for the *Post-Gazette,* said that when he'd heard of the possible problem he mentioned it to WDTV's chief engineer, who said it was "news to him."

Tuning strips could be replaced simply. The bigger problem was reception, and that was not so easily remedied. Jack Mitchell, an engineer for WDTV, recalled that he made a fortune retuning home antennas, "because in those days they had antennas around Pittsburgh that were tuned to the specific channel, and one channel difference made a big difference in some of the reception because the picture wasn't that good once it arrived at the transmitter to begin with." Then, once transmitted, the signal had to cope with Pittsburgh's hilly terrain. "That's why they had to tune antennas specifically for the channels in those days." Mitchell recalled installing rotary antennas for about $100 per installation. "In those days it was primitive getting into the house. These days you have these electric things that go right through the brick. You had to pound with star drills in those days. And it wasn't easy.

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I almost slid off many a roof. It wasn't easy at all. You worked for that 100 bucks."

The transmission of a UHF signal would generate problems even more onerous than those of a VHF signal. But when Larry Israel and Donovan Faust talked one day in a restaurant near WDTV, they were unaware of the problems they would encounter:

> Larry and I were sitting there one day having lunch and we said, "You know, this is a great time. We should be thinking about trying to get a station somewhere." And we talked back and forth a little bit, and then we looked at each other as if we both had the idea at the same time, and said, "Well, what about here? We know this market better than any other." And we knew we couldn't get in the battle for the "V's," but we thought it was worth a calculated risk to get a "U" and get it established before the others got out of hearing. We knew the hearings would go on forever, and we felt we could get ourselves established. Our only concern was the terrain in Pittsburgh, and later, after we decided to proceed with this thing, we went to eastern Pennsylvania, where there were already some UHF stations on the air to see whether or not it was feasible. Well, lots there seemed to indicate that it was.

The flat terrain of eastern Pennsylvania would prove to be quite different from the hills of the western part of the state. "It later turned out it was almost disastrous trying to get into all the pockets of the Pittsburgh area, but we decided, yes, by gosh, let's do it."

The idea of leaving DuMont for their own station was too tempting to resist. "[WDTV] got to be sort of static," Israel said, "and it looked like an interesting venture."

> And we thought we could try all these experiments. We'd talk about it at night—"Why don't we do this?" And Don and I would talk about it—we can do all these things and DuMont doesn't seem terribly innovative, they don't want to do anything more, it's a money machine. It's just too bad [it failed] because we did all the right things—artistically, program-wise, news, everything except the engineering and the acceptance. Advertising acceptance was simply not there yet.

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Even the call letters expressed their goal—WENS: *E*ntertainment, *N*ews, *S*ports. "We had everything right," Israel said, looking back on his long and successful career in television. "The time wasn't right."

WENS began in 1953 and ceased operation "exactly four years to the day" after it had started, Nick Perry recalled. According to Dan Mallinger, there was one reason for its failure.

> There weren't any viewers. At that time no TV set had a UHF band on it. You used to have to get a little box, a converter. And you hooked the converter into your TV set and then you had to tune it, fine-tune it. And you never got a fine-tuned picture. It was always fuzzy. And nobody bothered to buy them. So I remember at one point the station bought a couple of hundred of them and went around and gave them away to all the ad agencies. At least the agencies they were trying to sell could see it. And everybody at the station got one to take home. But there was no viewership, none whatsoever.

The story of WENS was repeated at UHF stations in television markets across the nation. By 1960 there would be just seventy-five UHF stations left on the air. It was not until 1964 that Congress made it mandatory for manufacturers to put both VHF and UHF on all sets sold, and not until 1974 did UHF stations as a group turn loss into profit. In Pittsburgh, as in many other cities, investors in UHF television stations lost money waiting for the government to act.

By 1953 many of the forms and practices for local television news in Pittsburgh had been established. The rudimentary organization of a staff was in place, with a news director and a producer, both working to gather and assemble news. The number of people on the staff would increase, as various functions in the newsroom became specialties. The main newscast of the day inherited the traditional 11:00 P.M. time slot from radio, as television accommodated itself to what the audience was accustomed to. While economics continued to be a factor in the advertising agency newscasts, revenue exerted its influence on station-controlled news as well. The World Tonight was divided into news, sports, and weather in order to generate more advertising income. Within that tripartite structural division, reporters were becoming specialized, as sports reporters and "television meteorologists" became standard for television news.

Dramatics became part of newscasts, as sets were designed in order to

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create an authoritative atmosphere. Studio directors began to take seriously the techniques of television production that were developing in the creative flurry for various kinds of local programs and the often elaborately produced live commercials. The urge to make news dramatic, in keeping with other productions on the dramatic medium of television, even led to adding music as background for film. The "look" of the news, so important today, began to be a consideration even then.

The wire services and newspapers were still the main news sources, just as they had been in radio. The difference was that television openly acknowledged newspapers. The presence of one camera and one part-time photographer was the impetus to listen to the police scanner for possible events to film. The presence of a news producer provided the opportunity to use the telephone to seek out news sources. But by and large, the sources sought out were still "official sources." Officials provided wire services and newspapers with news, police scanners led to public officials, and the telephone calls were placed, for the most part, to well-known officials of various kinds. Even the film imported from New York and Washington consisted mainly of official events, the rituals and ceremonial politics of public life that could be planned for by photographers. Reality as described by local television news was thus defined by an "official" view of reality, which reinforced the reality presented by newspapers.

The increasing use of film, however, began to influence the form of television news. Stories were written to accompany the film that was available—the visuals shaped what was said. With film there was a renewed trend toward the story form of reporting, with a theme for each narrative, a trend that would grow with more sophisticated uses of film. More and more the ability to film local events led to a search for local stories, and local news began to crowd out national and international news.

WDTV continued without competition for most of the decade. UHF station WENS failed to provide competition for Pittsburgh's only VHF station, but it did have an effect on news, for many of its staff members followed Faust and Israel to the new station in 1953. Dave Murray went as newscaster for the 6:15 evening newscast, and Dan Mallinger from Pitt Parade became news director and newscaster for the 11:00 P.M. news. Nick Perry left his Neighborhood News at noon to become a salesman for WENS. The World Tonight was forced to look for a replacement for Murray, who turned out to be Bill Burns. Burns brought with him a new and more aggressive way of doing radio news, developed by independent radio stations. Once again radio news would influence television news.

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5 News with Pictures

Let's Get It Firsthand

The period between late 1953 until the end of the decade, when two new stations ended WDTV's monopoly, was a time of slow but steady advancement for television news. In 1955 DuMont sold WDTV to Westinghouse Broadcasting, and the station became KDKA-TV, continuing a broadcast tradition in Pittsburgh that was in its fourth decade. KDKA hired the first full-time photographer to film local stories. The first mobile unit, equipped with a two-way radio, made it possible to get to the scene before there was only aftermath left to film. A new, more modern studio spurred the development of production technology. Stringers in dozens of nearby communities contributed film of spot news stories, giving the newscasts a fuller visual look. A radio reporter moved to television, where he became prominent in Pittsburgh television news for nearly forty years, and the first woman to do hard news joined the news staff. The primitive form of earlier newscasts was becoming more sophisticated, taking on more of the shape of today's television news.

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With the exodus of several staff members to the UHF station, WENS, WDTV was forced to look for a replacement for Dave Murray. They turned once more to local radio and a young man named Bill Burns, who had made a reputation for himself as an aggressive reporter for KQV radio. By the time he retired nearly forty years later, Burns had become the person most identified with television news in Pittsburgh. He was one of the young reporters from independent radio stations who, because they had to compete with the dominant KDKA, were developing a news style that was more active in seeking news to report, rather than relying so much on newspapers and the wire services for news to read on the air. Once again, forced to a transformation by the advent of television, radio was having its own effect on its visual big brother.

In the years before the coming of television, the radio news formula had begun to change. Radio's first competition came from radio itself. In the postwar period, AM radio experienced a major growth spurt, and the competition from new stations contributed to a more aggressive local news. Local radio experienced its most powerful competition from television later, of course, but in the decade after the war the keenest competition came from the proliferation of local stations. The 950 stations in operation at war's end were located in the denser population areas, with powerful, clear-channel stations, like KDKA, supplying radio broadcasts to much of the rest of the nation. As the number of stations grew, smaller stations, located in outlying communities, began to compete with the established stations. Suddenly the older stations were for the first time faced with competition. Moreover, because the new stations lacked network affiliation, they were forced to do local programming, especially music and news. Their music was in the form of records played by announcers who were now called "disc jockeys," and such programs were relatively inexpensive to produce, in contrast to the live musical programs of the established stations. Evening drama and variety shows were disappearing from the networks as performers moved over to television. George Burns and Gracie Allen were first, making the move in 1950, while Jack Benny was last, dropping his weekly radio show in 1955 to concentrate on television, although he did not do a weekly program on television until 1960. Such stations as KDKA radio were forced to reevaluate their formats as the audience moved to the smaller, independent radio stations and to television.

As the number of radio stations increased, the listening habits of the audience changed. The portrait of a family sitting around a large, cabinet-style radio set in the evening listening to variety or drama was fading.

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Increasingly people were taking a radio along when they left home. In 1946 the printing of wiring circuits on ceramic furthered the miniaturization of radio receivers, and the next year Emerson introduced an AC-DC battery-operated portable radio. Other manufacturers soon followed. In 1948 Bell Telephone Laboratories developed the transitor, which contributed to the portability of radios. As bikini-clad women appeared on American beaches for the first time that year, they often carried portable radios. When the war ended, Americans had cars that they had nursed for the war's duration, usually one to a family, and they drove them "downtown" to shop, or, more likely, rode a trolley (for just twelve cents in Pittsburgh). All that was changing too. Public transportation declined as families moved to ranch houses in the newly constructed suburbs, traveling to work or to shopping malls in new cars, all the while listening to the radio.

Car radios were a fairly recent phenomenon, but by the end of the war only 9 million cars had radios. In 1928 William Lear (who later designed the Learjet) had visited Paul Galvin, a battery manufacturer in Chicago, and placed an invention on his desk. The outcome was that Galvin changed the name of his company to Motorola and began to manufacture automobile radios. Early models ran off batteries located under the floorboard,[1] but by 1952 more than half the cars on the streets and highways had radios, and automobile passengers constituted a new audience for radio broadcasters. Radio's audience was now in transition, on the move, and the old program concepts were no longer attracting an audience who now listened to radio while they did other things.

Because the new radio formula was developing when television was in its initial period, the change in radio is usually attributed to the competition from television. But that is an oversimplification. The first competition to have an effect on AM radio came from AM radio itself.[2] One example of the assumption that radio was monolithic until challenged by television is expressed in a study done in 1956,[3] which reports a survey indicating that the number of news broadcasts by radio stations in Pennsylvania had increased between 1949 and 1956. The study concluded that the increase was due to the competition from television, but a closer look indicates that it was competition, certainly, but not primarily from television. Radio's competition came from the proliferation of smaller, local radio stations. And those stations put greater emphasis on local news.

KDKA is a typical case. A 50,000-watt, clear-channel station, the Westinghouse property had enjoyed more than twenty-five years of dominance in the market. Three other 5,000-watt stations had begun to broad-

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cast within two years of KDKA's famous initial broadcast of November 2, 1920. One additional 250-watt station went on the air in 1932,[4] but in a two-year period following the war, 1947–48, three additional stations were licensed in Pittsburgh proper, plus at least seven additional stations in nearby communities that had previously depended mainly on KDKA for their radio.[5] One of those stations was WEDO in McKeesport.

Al McDowell was news director at WEDO in McKeesport, one of the new stations that provided competition for KDKA radio. McDowell recalled the basic programming of that time as consisting of news, ethnic programs, and contemporary music. There were five-minute newscasts every hour, with fifteen minutes of news at noon. As significant as the quantity of the news is the content of the news, which gave more attention to local news, gathered by reporters. Jim Snyder, a writer for KDKA at the time, said: "WEDO's studios are right in downtown McKeesport, so those guys went out and started gathering news on their own because they didn't get much from the wire." McDowell remembered the frequency with which he covered city council meetings and spot news stories:

> They were developing news because local news was coming into its own. They were getting away from network news. You had to start to cover city council, which hadn't been done before on radio. You had to depend on your newspapers for news, but now radio's going to cover city council and the wreck and the fire.

Covering city council did not, however, mean live coverage.

> This is not microphones, live coverage. This is sending a reporter to city council, coming back after the meeting, and reporting what happened at city council. You talked about it and you could write a story for the newscast, and the story went for a minute. And you'd write a story for the next newscast. And cover the fire, go to the fire.

By contrast, KDKA radio had no reporters—they had announcers who were celebrity performers and rarely left the station. When there were few local stations and KDKA was the "big boomer," the lack of competition had made news-gathering unnecessary. But with the proliferation of local radio stations, KDKA "went into this independent radio mode," according to Snyder. It was not television that provided the competition that was catalyst

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for old-time radio's change. Instead, "KDKA was reacting to the rise of independent radio." Actually, KDKA was rather late in reacting, but the account of how it was changed is indicative of the impact that independent radio had on the established AM stations.

Until the mid-1950s KDKA was still operating in the old radio mode, with its NBC affiliation. Jim Snyder, who had left the station in 1949 to work for Duquesne University, returned as news director in 1954, "in time to preside over its switch to an independent music and news format, with news every hour on the hour."[6] Snyder said that until then Westinghouse Broadcasting "was always run by ex-engineers, and then they hired a guy named Chris Witting, and he hired a guy named Richard Pack, who had been program manager of WNEW." Pack echoed Snyder's words: "Westinghouse Radio Division was in the past always run by someone whose main function was head of 'left-handed dynamos and small engines' or something in a plant, and as a secondary operation was in charge of radio." Pack added that Chris Witting brought Westinghouse into the twentieth century: "One reason he hired me was I had run WNEW, a great music and news station, and knew my way around disc jockeys."

WNEW had been an anomaly when it set the standard for independent radio stations with a format of all music and news. The New York station, founded in 1934, had a manager named Bernice Judis, a woman Pack described as "a delightful person who could also be very difficult." Having a woman as station manager in the 1930s was as different as the music-and-news format she set up. WNEW established a reputation for news with its effective coverage of the 1935 trial of Bruno Hauptmann for the kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby. In order to fill the hours between reports of the trial, an announcer named Martin Block played recorded music on a program he called "The Make Believe Ballroom." It was the start of a format of popular music, with records played by entertaining personalities who were later called "disc jockeys." The all-music format incorporated a five-minute news summary on the hour. Bernice Judis concluded an agreement with the *New York Daily News* that set up a broadcast-news division with its own staff of writer-reporters, who wrote in an energetic style, changing leads to match the change of audience throughout the broadcast day. WNEW succeeded because it addressed the wants and wishes of its changing audience.

Thus the formula for independent radio's music-and-news format was born. It was copied by hundreds of stations across the nation as an alternative to "riding the network" by the older, established stations. Owners of independent radio stations across the country came to New York to spend

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several days in a hotel room listening to WNEW and taking copious notes, trying to copy its success.[7] Dick Pack had been program manager for Bernice Judis, and he introduced the WNEW format to KDKA, including disc jockeys and reporters. Al McDowell said he did disc jockey work in addition to his news reporting.

> Back in 1952, that was about the time we were going from 78s to 45s [records]. The big thing was to get the hit record on forty-five. And we were getting records into the studio on forty-five. They were coming in faster than the cores you had to put on the turntable so you could play a forty-five [45s had a large hole in the center]. We devised a method because the cores weren't there. We formed two paperclips. If you got them perfectly centered and put those on the core of a forty-five record, you could play it and it would be reasonably close to the 45 rpms with two paperclips.

As the primitive technology grew more sophisticated, it gave rise to the high-profile disc jockey and enabled reporters to do more than talk about stories.

Advances in technology were affecting radio as well as television. When reporters first were sent out to cover stories, they had to return to the station to talk about what they had witnessed. There were no "actualities"—sound recordings made on the scene. McDowell spoke about a discussion of the news following the fifteen-minute noon newscast on WEDO in McKeesport: "And then I would go into another studio with Mr. Badger [the station manager], and we would discuss for a half-hour the news of the day, which was sold, by the way, and easy to sell." Sound recordings made in the field would come in the mid-1950s when audiotape recorders became available. McDowell remembered his first tape recorder, called a "Cubcorder":

> It was a briefcase, an attaché case. It was reel-to-reel audiotape, and the power source was acid. You were not allowed to upset your briefcase because the acid would spill. You would have a microphone, a very cumbersome mike, the size of today's hand-held radio. You would push two buttons, hold the microphone up to the person you were interviewing, get it on reel-to-reel. That's the interview. Take it back and put it in your report.

Snyder said:

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> I remember using [the Cubcorder] in 1954. It was the first portable tape recorder I had run into. Up to that time, if they wanted to record something you went out with an engineer. He had some Ampex-type humongous thing, and they'd do mike setups and all that. And if the [Cubcorder] tipped over, you had problems because the acid would come out of the battery. But I remember using that a lot, and we stuck to that for quite some time. I have no idea what the year was. It was after I left and went to Washington that they converted over to smaller recorders.

(Snyder left KDKA in 1959 to manage the Westinghouse news bureau, established in 1957 with Rod MacLeish in charge. When MacLeish left to set up a news bureau for Westinghouse in London, Snyder replaced him in Washington.) Thus it was not the technology that caused reporters to begin gathering news—the technology simply made it easier. But reporters were going to the scene to witness the news—in the manner of Al McDowell's attending city council meetings—and returning to report on the air. It was quite a contrast to the old radio formula of rip and read from a wire service or borrowing from a newspaper. Tape recorders made it possible to record sound on the scene, adding to the richness of the news report. But the new radio news formula pre-dated the tape recorder.

Bill Burns was an example of the new radio reporters who aggressively sought out news stories. Burns had worked briefly as a newspaper reporter in Philadelphia before he arrived at KQV radio. An item in *Broadcasting* magazine illustrates the kind of news-gathering he was doing in 1949. " 'Let's get it firsthand,' said Bill Burns to Herb Morrison, his newsroom mate at KQV Pittsburgh, as they read the Tuesday noon flash carrying the first news of the worst airplane disaster in history."[8] It was the same Herb Morrison who had reported the *Hindenburg* disaster and was now back in Pittsburgh. The two placed a call to the Civil Aeronautics Board in Washington and talked with a woman who could see the crash scene from her office window, located at National Airport. KQV cut into its "Say It with Music" program with the tape-recorded telephone conversation, in which the woman insisted that at least fifty people had died in the crash, even though the UP wire had estimated the dead at ten. The Pittsburgh United Press office listened to the broadcast and called its Washington bureau to tell them that a KQV eyewitness account had placed the casualty figure at fifty—a figure that was confirmed later in the day. Burns brought that same aggressive news style to WDTV when he replaced Dave Murray.

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Burns's first television appearance had been as host of the early WDTV live game show "Guest to Ghost." This was not an unusual course for a future broadcast journalist. Walter Cronkite had been host of The Morning Show on CBS, and his job "was to interview celebrities and other guests and to get off a few perky one-liners of his own." (Cronkite even had his own gag writers.)[9] Mike Wallace had been host of an NBC quiz show called "The Big Surprise."[10] Neither Burns nor Guest to Ghost was particularly memorable. George Eisenhauer, one of the few who retained a vague recollection of the program, described it as "the worst program ever on television." Eleanor Schano recalled that Bill Burns would ride the elevator down from the KQV studio on the fourteenth floor of the Chamber of Commerce building to the WDTV studios in the mezzanine to do Guest to Ghost. "Nobody had any experience," she added. "We were all learning together." Eisenhauer retained a keen memory of Schano's role on the program. "Eleanor Schano, God love her, the most beautiful woman on Pittsburgh television, was the Vanna White of the show. She was the lady in a very skimpy dress, [who] used to put the letters on the blackboard or whatever it was." The format of Guest to Ghost was less clear in Eisenhauer's memory: "The whole premise of the show was dumb. They would ask questions, and they had a Bergen Evans-type person who, with a dictionary, or what have you, would grade whatever answers they gave."[11] Guest to Ghost got its title from the white hood that went over the head of the panelist as the "guest" became a "ghost," although that practice was soon discontinued for what we can only presume were obvious reasons.

Like Cronkite and Wallace, the strength of Bill Burns was not entertainment but his more aggressive news-gathering style. Burns continued his KQV radio style as he moved into television news in 1953. The change was gradual, of course—there was still a reliance on the wire services and on newspapers. Dan Mallinger, who became news director of WENS in 1953, said that television news still looked to newspapers: "That's where you got your leads. You didn't have reporters or anybody out there, and people at that point didn't think of calling the TV station about a news story. They called the newspaper. So you relied on the newspapers." Burns also relied on newspapers at first, at least for the noon news. George Thomas said he would arrive at the station early to clear the wires, monitor the police radio, and answer the telephone. He had the international and national segments for the noon news written when Bill Burns arrived about 11:30 A.M. "Of course, I had everything ready except the local segment," Thomas said. "He would call the city desk of the *Press* and ask them what was happening. He

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would take notes. So that's how we got our local news coverage." George Eisenhauer agreed that Burns "always did that, but he did have the decency to rewrite the news."

The newspaper was acknowledged with a slide that said: "Local news, courtesy of the *Pittsburgh Press,* " but that was for the noon news only. The reliance on the newspaper for the station's first newscast of the day is perhaps explained by noting the long news day that was required. Burns's shift did not end until 11:30 at night, with the completion of The World Tonight. The rest of the day the news was gathered by the station's staff. Said Thomas, "Our contacts would call us on the phone, or if our guys [photographers] were out cruising they'd call in and say, 'Hey, I just ran across a. . . . ' " It was active news-gathering, a major advancement over the assumptions about radio and television news at the time.

The changes occurring at KDKA radio, as it reacted to the competition from independent radio stations, illustrate the way both radio and television news were regarded in those days. News meant, first, newspapers, with radio and television following their lead, repeating items already in the papers. Jim Snyder's account of one of the first things he did when he became news director of KDKA radio in 1954 illustrates the primacy of newspapers.

> I used to get all these press releases from U.S. Steel, and I'd receive them after the stories were in the paper. I called the head of public relations from U.S. Steel and said, "Why are you wasting your time mailing me all this stuff, and by the time I get it, it's absolutely useless to me?" He was kind of flabbergasted. First of all, I guess nobody had called him from KDKA for a century or so, and he said, "Well, I guess we could put you on the A-list." And I discovered what the A-list was. They hand-delivered these things to the newspapers, and they just didn't think about that kind of servicing of the radio stations because the radio stations had no reputation for being aggressive news-gatherers. They pretty much relied on the wires.

Burns went beyond the wire services, both at KQV radio and later at WDTV television. He went to the newsmakers and they came to him. "He knew everybody in the city of Pittsburgh," George Eisenhauer said. "And news came to Bill Burns. That didn't happen to anybody but Bill Burns. Bill Burns would get a story if the story hadn't happened yet, because he would be called [by newsmakers]. So he had a natural edge on everybody else in the

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news business." Chuck Boyle agreed with Eisenhauer's assessment. "People liked [Burns] and found out he was a newsman, and people from all walks of life could relate to him. They'd come up and talk to him. He had the respect and admiration of the politicians and, most of all, the respect of his fellow news people, because he was a newsman. He's the best that ever came down the pike, as far as I'm concerned." "When there was an interview to be done," George Thomas said, "like there's a steel strike, Bill would take the cameraman and go out and interview Dave McDonald [president of the steelworkers' union]."

Taking a cameraman out to do an interview was a major advancement in television news, comparable to taking an engineer to do a radio interview. The technology of sound-on-film made field interviews possible, but the cumbersome equipment made it an awkward process. Chuck Boyle was keenly aware of the difference sound made. "You had natural sound. You were doing the interviews, instead of saying so-and-so said this and so-in-so said that, they still said it, but so-and-so said this and that, and you heard and saw so-and-so saying this and saying that." But Boyle also remembered that he had to use a dolly to carry all the bulky sound equipment:

> The sound camera—the first one we got was a little box for optical sound. You looked like a truculent turtle carrying all this stuff. I was dead against the sound because of the logistics. I mean, this is heavy; this is cumbersome. You had one more thing to carry. Not only your hand camera, but you also had to carry the sound gear with you. It was a pain in the ass.

Much of the film was still silent, largely because of the cumbersome sound equipment.[12] Because of the limited number of photographers, care had to be exercised in determining which stories were worth covering on film. The limitations on personnel and equipment created the need for news judgment. Boyle said:

> I'd be in the newsroom and I'd hear the police and fire alarm going to a second alarm. And I'm ready to go, I'm like an old fire horse. Called the cab, boom, it's going to pick me up downstairs. Bill said, "Hold on. Wait a minute." I said, "What for? The sooner I get there [the sooner] we're going to get it." He'd say, "Just wait five minutes." Sure enough, "Oh, we just canceled the [alarm] box. They only brought the two alarm up because it was a certain

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> building in a certain part of town. Just bringing extra equipment." Nine times out of ten Bill was right, and this is why I learned a lot from him. And you got to know the city pretty well—what you could and couldn't do.

Chuck Boyle had become the first full-time photographer for WDTV because of a story he had done for Pitt Parade. Boyle climbed atop a bridge to get the story.

> One day, a Friday, I got this call. Morry [Fierst] said, "Run over to the Smithfield Street bridge. There's a guy that's going to jump." So I got right over there and saw this guy up there, and everybody was still getting together, so I climbed up there. I got my establishing shot of the bridge. I got the guy on top of the bridge. I saw a hell of a news story. I had this gut feeling this guy wasn't going to jump. And I climbed up and said, "What the hell are you doing up here?" He said, "I'm going to jump." I said, "Nah, you don't want to jump, that's the coward's way out." He said, "I just came back from Korea, I can't find a job, my wife left me—so what is there?" I said, "Oh, there's a lot of things out there. I'll help you find a job. Come on, this is stupid." In the meantime, traffic's starting to build up. They'd cut off all the traffic on the bridge, and—you can just imagine. So anyway, he's over there and I'm yelling at him and he's yelling at me. All the noise going on, the horns are honking. But I'm taking pictures of this guy, and I'm trying to do it in some sequential order. I'm showing down the bridge and how far the jump would be. Anyway, the guy comes over to me and we sit up there like two pigeons on a perch, and we're talking back and forth. I'm trying to sympathize, because now the inside is coming out. Instead of photography, now the human being is coming out and I can sympathize with this guy. We're about the same age, I guess. I said, "Look, why don't you come on down? I'll find you a job, I'll get something for you. This is ridiculous." And he says, "Well, I'm going to go and you're going to go with me." I said, "If you want to go you can do it, but I ain't gonna go with you." At that point I smacked him over the head with a camera. It just stunned him and I got away.

While the potential suicide was stunned, the police were able to subdue him. The story got Chuck Boyle noticed.

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Bill Burns wanted both the film and Chuck Boyle for television news. Boyle said he took the film and went to WDTV, where Burns told him: "I heard about it. I haven't seen it yet. It was a very brave thing for you to do. We're excited to see the film. We're going to put you on camera to talk about it." Putting a guest "on camera" in those days meant seating the guest on the news set. Al McDowell explained that if he had a guest on the news—"a newsmaker I'd call them in those days"—that person "had to come in, sit beside me on the set, and the camera would pull back so they'd get both of us." Boyle's failure to mention Pitt Parade prominently enough during his on-camera interview created a rift with Packaged Programs, and he took a new job with Warren Smith, a film processor and independent producer.

The new job utilized his pilot's license. Boyle would fly a seaplane to Chester, West Virginia, land on the Ohio River, and film the races at Waterford Park, a thoroughbred race track. Then he flew back to Pittsburgh, again landing on the Ohio River. Flying speeded the process for getting the film on the air for a program called "A Day at the Races." The process of filming the races provides a glimpse of the kind of enterprise that went into developing techniques to cope with the primitive film technology. Boyle said he would flip from lens to lens as the horses drew near, editing "in the camera" so the finished product was ready for broadcast. He worked out an arrangement with the track announcer. "He would take a breath, just a fraction, and he'd know that when he takes that breath at the pole I'm flipping the lens. And it would just—bang, bang—it would just be so beautiful." The job filming races lasted for only a short time before Boyle got an invitation to become the first full-time photographer for WDTV news.

The job of a full-time photographer in those days meant being constantly on the move. Chuck Boyle said he managed to get a considerable number of filmed stories each day:

> Oh, five, six, eight, ten maybe. I got to the point where I could shoot a story on one roll of film. There'd be a hundred feet of film. I had to learn from Morry Fierst [of Pitt Parade], because he would take a big roll and cut it down and you'd only get ninety feet instead of one hundred. But I used to shoot stories on eighteen feet of film. That's thirty seconds, so a minute was fifty feet. So I could put two or three stories on one roll of film.

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That came with an emerging news judgment: "By that time you're learning it. You shoot enough stories, the same story is going to occur in your lifetime at least a thousand times. So you make a judgment. He's not going to use this, he's not going to use that—so you save the writers some time." It was the news judgment that Boyle learned on Pitt Parade, a news judgment that other Pitt Parade photographers would bring along when they too moved on to Pittsburgh television stations.

Another emerging technology that had an effect on television news was the two-way radio, which made mobile units possible. Two-way radio cars first appeared in 1952, and television soon began to utilize them in news-gathering. Al McDowell recalled that the first mobile units had warning lights on them. One enterprising reporter, amber light flashing, forced a taxi off the road in his hurry to get to a story. When the passenger in the cab turned out to be a television executive, the light came off. Boyle said that his first mobile unit was his own car, until the station finally bought a station wagon for his use. Use of the mobile unit to cover spot news stories reminded Boyle of the continuing influence of the ad agencies in covering news. "At one time I covered an accident," Boyle said, "and I just happened to be in the area. It was a tanker truck. Bang, it went up. I mean it got involved in the accident." The film clearly showed the name of the oil company. "The director got really flipped out and the salesperson got bent out of shape." The story went on the air, but Boyle remembered that the tension between sales and news continued until the early 1960s, when an incoming news director finally put a stop to any influence the sales department had on news.

In 1954 DuMont moved WDTV to a new studio just three months before the station was sold to Westinghouse. The new studio was located at Gateway One, a new building that was part of Pittsburgh's showplace of urban rehabilitation at the thirty-six-acre Point Park, where the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers combine to form the Ohio River. It was the spot that a young George Washington had noted in his *Journal* on November 23, 1753, was "extremely well situated for a Fort, as it has the absolute Command of both Rivers."[13] Along with the city itself, television was entering the modern age, looking to a promising future but with deep roots in the past.

The new studio was a noted improvement over the old WDTV studio. Studio A was seventy-five feet square, with room for an audience of three hundred. Studio B was for news and smaller presentations. The new facili-

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ties included a fully equipped film department, a newsroom, and several lounges (presumably not just for announcers). The move to the new studio was accomplished over a period of time. George Eisenhauer said:

> I remember doing a station break at 4:40 in the Chamber of Commerce Building and one at five o'clock in Gateway One. Walking down the street, *walking* down the street, just getting there in time to do the next station break. Carrying the log board. I don't know why we did that. I don't know why we didn't take a cab or what have you, but I used to walk down the street. And we did this for several weeks until we got into the new studio.

New studios did not, however, mean the end of inexpensive television production. Al McDowell remembered the simple setup he found when he made the transition from radio to television. WQED-TV wanted to produce a Sunday morning religion program.

> They called me down and said, "What this involves is you going before a camera and talking to a preacher from the Methodist church." And I said, "I'm not a Methodist. I don't know Methodist from methodology." They said, "That's all right." The program, of course, was done live on Sunday morning and entirely on one camera.

McDowell evidently performed satisfactorily in his discussion of "methodology," because he was invited to be the reporter for a newscast KDKA began on Sunday night at 11:00. There he found the same simple one-camera setup. But the newscasts did use pictures—not film, but still pictures. Recalled McDowell:

> I would hold them up. I had three or four pictures on the desk to my left. The one camera would be on me, and when I mentioned the aircraft or the flood, I would gently pull up the picture, and the camera would pan off me down onto the picture. I would continue reading my script—no teleprompter, by the way—which I wrote, so I pretty well knew what was going on. The camera would then take an eight- or ten-second shot of the picture, very slowly pan off the picture back up to me. And I would lower that picture and pull it off, and get ready for the next picture whenever my story called for it.

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The new studio meant newer equipment, but improvements came gradually. Bob Battenfelter, who had started in audio at the transmitter and moved to video-switching with the first studio, said that the primitive practices lasted well into the days of the new studio. They were still inventing mechanical ways to do effects that are digitally produced today. "We taught kids how to swim by taking a fishbowl and taking a table about the size of a regular coffee table," Battenfelter said, "and put black cloth over it, lay a kid on, and have her swim, and then super[impose] in the fishbowl." Graphics were still done with a live camera and a box of letters on a felt board. "Somebody saw it in a restaurant," Battenfelter said of the felt sandwich-board. You know how you go to a restaurant and it's set up?" They would shoot the word on the felt board with a camera, superimposing it on the picture on the screen. By about 1960 this was finally replaced by slides, then by a graphics generator in the 1970s. The zoom lens replaced the fixed lens of the early cameras during the mid-1950s, and this was quite an improvement. A variable focal lens, the zoom lens allowed the camera to move smoothly from one focal length to another. Battenfelter said that the first zoom lens, a large piece of equipment about three feet long, had to be flown in to Pittsburgh for football games. As the new equipment became available for studio productions, it was of course also used on newscasts.

One bit of technology incorporated for obtaining news film was the home film camera. George Thomas borrowed the idea from his apprenticeship at CBS:

> They had stringers, paid according to what they shoot. You don't pay them if they're not shooting anything. You supply them with film, and if they shoot a story send it in. We pay for transportation by plane, by bus, by car if they drive it in. So we [Thomas and Burns] had lunch with Fred Remington, and he wrote in his column in the *Press* saying "Channel 2 plans to set up stringers. Anybody interested call Bill Burns or me."

By the time Thomas left KDKA in 1960 to move to WTAE, there were seventy stringers throughout the tri-state area. Whenever someone would make light of the stringers, Thomas would reply, "Who do you think gives us the groundhog story in Punxsutawney, or the fires out of Youngstown and Wheeling and Steubenville and all around—Morgantown." He recalled:

> They were very faithful. If there was no bus they would drive it in for fifteen dollars. They'd love to have their cards, saying, "Channel

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> 2, Television Photographer." They loved that in their wallet. I made plates for them, for in front of their cars so they could get through police lines.

News was not something the station invested in heavily.

> We had trouble convincing management of the value of news [Thomas said]. They said, "Oh, it's a losing proposition. It costs us money. We don't make any money off of news." We were always like a deficit. But we said, "This is your image in the community." They were slow to expand the news here. They were slow in recognizing the support staff.

But the staff expanded, if slowly.

One person is especially worth noting, and his story is not unlike that of many who started with a dream of being an on-air reporter only to end up as a decision-maker for television news. His name is Al Primo, who has been credited with creating "happy talk news" for Eyewitness News on WABC-TV in New York in the 1970s.[14] Primo was eventually hired as a writer-producer at KDKA-TV, after starting part-time while still a journalism student at the University of Pittsburgh. "I think it was what they call on-the-job training or student interns," said Chuck Boyle. "Then they eventually hired him. And Al wanted to be on the air so bad he could taste it. He used to go into the wire room and close the door, and with all the noise in the wire room he would practice." Jim Snyder said Bill Burns asked him to give Primo a chance on the air.

> By this time we're down in the Gateway Center Building. KDKA radio's on the third floor and the TV station's down on the first floor. Bill Burns called me and asked me if I would let Al read some newscasts on the FM. So Al came up and I auditioned him and said, "Al, you have to understand that we maintain some level of quality here, and you're not up to that yet. You have no experience. You have no training, really, and you've got to go get some before anybody's going to let you on the station."

Snyder recalled that Primo was angry with him for a long time but that later, after he'd become famous as a news director, he'd tell how Snyder had saved him from a fate worse than death—being on the air.

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The shift from radio to television can be a traumatic experience, as anyone who has ever made that transition can testify. Burns was no exception. The week before Dave Murray left WDTV and The World Tonight, the crew practiced the news with Burns after each newscast—even though he was "scared to death" at first. About a month after Burns's debut, columnist Win Fanning complimented him for an enterprising interview he had done, again by telephone, commenting that Burns had "managed to change the format of a long-established and always superior TV news program to something worthy of his professional reputation. What was mere good news reading has become excellent news reporting."[15] Fanning added that in the spirit of fairness he had refrained from commenting on Burns's performance, waiting until Burns had the chance to establish himself, noting that Burns had "managed his initial video smile" and that "soon we shall no longer be able to refer to him as the Ed Sullivan of WDTV."

But Burns brought personality to television news in Pittsburgh. "Bill Burns was the first one I knew that really glamorized the news," George Eisenhauer said:

> I mean, Bill Burns *was* the news. It wasn't Bill Burns *giving* the news—it was the news, you know, given by Bill Burns. Bill Burns *made* local news. I mean, somebody would've come along if there hadn't been a Bill Burns, but he was the one that did it. You listened to Bill Burns just like the radio people used to listen to Beckley Smith [a noted Pittsburgh radio newscaster]. In fact, Bill Burns took his cues from Beckley Smith. Somebody was hit by a streetcar one day and Beckley Smith said, "And the big red wagon of death rolled down Grant Street today and took a life." I'm paraphrasing here, but this is the type of news he used to do. And Bill Burns did the same thing. He made it so that whether he was there or not he was there.

One minor irony is that the news close that became a Bill Burns trademark—"Goodbye, good luck, and good news tomorrow"—was invented by Dave Murray, the man Burns replaced on WDTV. After WENS, the UHF station, closed down, Murray worked for a brief time with an ad agency before moving to a television station in Minneapolis. The agency had the Duquesne Brewing Company account, by then the sponsor of The World Tonight. Murray said Burns did "a real good job with hard news, but he always kind of faded out. He'd say, 'Goodnight.' Today that might be swell,

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but in those days everybody wanted a zinger." Murray took Edward R. Murrow's formula close from London: "Good night. Good luck," and John Daly's "Good night and good news tomorrow," and put them together for Burns. "So we just combined a couple of proven things and had him say both. Goodbye, good luck, and good news tomorrow." Thus another broadcast tradition was invented by the incestuous process of copying itself.

In one broadcast tradition Pittsburgh was ahead of its time: a woman did "hard news." During the 1950s the exception to women in network news was Pauline Frederick, who became chief United Nations Correspondent for NBC in 1953 and continued in that role for twenty-one years. Barbara Walters did not join "Today" until 1961, and then only as a freelance writer. Only when Walters became an on-camera regular was she regarded as a genuine journalist rather than another in the line of women who did women's features.

But in Pittsburgh, Florence Sando began to do her own news program on WDTV in 1954 and was fully regarded as a member of the news team. After earning a degree in "speech and journalism" (the usual major for aspiring journalists in those days) and a master's degree in drama, Sando joined Kaufmann's department store in Pittsburgh in 1941. Her main responsibility was producing and hosting a radio program called "Everything Under the Sun," sponsored of course by Kaufmann's, on KQV radio. Beckley Smith did a news segment, and Florence "chatted" with Bob Prince, who became a local legend as broadcaster for the Pittsburgh Pirates. Sando also used her background in dramatics to dream up a radio program titled "Curtain Going Up," featuring reviews of entertainment. Soon after WDTV had built a studio and was searching for local programs, the Lando advertising agency approached Sando to create a television program, for which they would find a sponsor. She created a talk format for a program called "Ask the Girls," using two friends as regulars. Helen Rauh was a local actress, and Dorothy Randall, who had an acerbic wit, was fashion director for a local newspaper, the *Sun-Telegraph*. The three discussed various questions and topics sent in by viewers. "Ask the Girls" aired two afternoons a week. Sando recalled that she used her instincts, honed on radio, to decide what would appeal to her audience. She searched through decorating magazines to get ideas for a set, looking for something that would be suitable for the pale blue everyone wore, because that color seemed to work best on black-and-white television.

Then in 1953 Florence Sando left Pittsburgh to become Mrs. Arthur

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Manson. After she returned in 1954, Station Manager Harold Lund decided to do a morning newscast. Since the morning viewers were believed to be mainly women, Lund wanted a woman to do the news. He turned to Florence Sando. The idea to use a woman was Lund's; the format and title, "Woman's Angle," was Sando's. Woman's Angle was fifteen minutes long—a full newscast in those days—at 9:30 each weekday morning. Sando recalled that she was the only person in the newsroom when she arrived at 6:00 each morning, so deciding what stories to use, writing the script, and editing the film were her responsibility. She learned how to splice film because she had to. The important thing to remember, Sando said, was that it was not women's features:

> It *was* the news. I tore it off the wire, it was film from UP, it was local footage shot by our newsroom cameraman, Chuck Boyle, and I took the film that had been delivered overnight and I did the splicing and putting it together for the show. I don't know how I even read the scripts, because I would tear off the wire stuff, staple what I wanted, and leave space for an introduction in my own handwriting where I changed things.

Each morning was an adventure. "I can remember," she said, "sometimes it would be 9:25 and they'd be screaming, 'Florence are you ready?' and I would run up the stairs, get behind the desk, short of breath, and start the show. I think today, when I see the credits roll, anybody could look good with that kind of support backup."

Relating news to the "woman's angle" did not mean selecting stories that related to a preconceived notion of what women were interested in. "Up until that time," Sando said, "food, home decorating, fashion and beauty, improved housekeeping, and child psychology" constituted the main topics for women. What was different about Woman's Angle was that it "offered news of the world on a woman-to-woman basis." One example is coverage of a strike by Westinghouse Electric employees. "I kept up with all the strike developments," Sando said, "and at some point I interviewed some strikers' wives. But they were getting the news. It was the woman's angle on hard news."

Relating hard news to women sometimes took imagination. "It was easy when the news was about Madame Chiang Kai-shek, or the ten best-dressed women, or Mrs. Roosevelt or Senator Margaret Chase Smith or Oveta Culp Hobby, but when the story was about some returning prisoners from

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Indochina or a Supreme Court ruling on desegregation, then I would have to introduce it with some ridiculous little line that seems to indicate that it related to women, and then I would get into the story as it was." Win Fanning, radio-television critic for the *Post-Gazette,* agreed:

> What we saw and heard was an extremely clever, excellently put together, and highly informative newscast in which "the angle" for the distaff side seemed to be based on the revolutionary proposition that a feminine, largely housewifely audience possesses the intelligence and has sufficient interest in the world about it to come to grips with current affairs.[16]

Fanning went on to provide an example of Sando's treatment of stories, noting: "She discussed (with films) Madame Chiang's address before the American Legion in some detail. But her backgrounding of the present Senate investigation of the censure motion against Senator McCarthy dealt with the affair in a straightforward, exceptionally easy to understand manner."

By 1955 Florence Sando was listed, along with the men, as one of the station's main newscasters. The *Pittsburgh Press* listed four daily newscasts: "Florence Sando in the morning, Bill Burns at noon, Carl Ide in the evening, and Bill Burns at night."[17] Carl Ide was doing an agency-produced newscast; Sando and Burns were on the station's news staff. The year before, when the station broadcast its first special election-night coverage, Sando was one of the reporters who read election results and interviewed candidates in the studio. Clearly Sando was considered to be on a par with the men. In June 1955 Woman's Angle was moved from 9:30 A.M. to 10:30 A.M. to accommodate the addition of a local variety show to the morning schedule at 9:30: "Home Edition," co-hosted by Jean Connolly and Hank Stohl. Sando continued to produce, write, and present news on her own program until February 1956, when she resigned because of a "difficult pregnancy," although as Sando later observed, they never used those terms in those days.

The number of women who had written to express their appreciation for the serious treatment of news on Woman's Angle evidently made an impression on Station Manager Harold Lund, for when another opportunity presented itself, he turned again to Florence, who by now had decided to use her married name, Florence Manson. That opportunity came when CBS decided to expand its daily soap opera, Love of Life, to half an hour. The station was not about to cancel Bill Burns's popular fifteen-minute noon

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news, so they needed another local program to fill the 12:15 P.M. time slot. Lund asked Florence back to do The Florence Manson Show in the style of Woman's Angle. The publicity release announcing the new show said Manson would handle "the role of in-depth commentator, interviewer, and fashion expert." The show continued until Florence moved with her husband to New York. In a period of pioneers on local television in Pittsburgh, Florence Sando Manson stood alone as a pioneer for women in television news.

By the end of the decade, KDKA had lost its monopoly, as two other stations were added to the Pittsburgh market and the competition fueled the development of news. In September 1957, WIIC, channel 11, went on the air, and was followed the next September by WTAE, channel 4. WTAE at first represented the more serious competition for KDKA, for the station was more active in news than WIIC and a number of the KDKA staff moved to the new ABC affiliate. Dave Murray was back in Pittsburgh to become program manager then news anchor for WTAE. There Eleanor Schano finally fulfilled her dream to become a reporter. George Thomas moved, taking most of his stringers with him. Fred DeFiore and Charlie McGrath left the now-defunct Pitt Parade to become station photographers. Other KDKA personnel also made the move to WTAE. Clearly there was now competition, with KDKA monitoring the newscasts of the other two stations.

Competition, however, was a two-headed sword. It did impel stations to take news more seriously, now that viewers had an alternative, but it also resulted in attempts by each station to get stories on the air first and to be the station that could boast of the most stories packed into a newscast. That tendency reduced the time and care devoted to each story. Florence Sando Manson commented pointedly on the fast pace of today's local newscasts and their tendency to present many stories without the kind of background that provides a context that enables the viewers to grasp the significant:

> Watching the news as it's done today, I feel that I was on the right track, that you couldn't just dive into a story. I wanted to background a story. If I had a story about a custody case, for example, I ran around town talking with child placement agencies and court authorities, finding out what the state laws were on adoption. By the time I did the story, quickly, I at least gave the viewers some background so they knew what it was I was talking about. So I tried always to make the story very clear. I wanted to review the develop-

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> ments up-to-date of a story that had been around for a while; I wanted to illuminate with whatever authoritative information I could gather.

So, the technology that made it possible to gather stories faster and present them quicker did not necessarily make them better.

By 1960 KDKA had a news director, two newscasters, two writer-reporters who were assigned to "beats," one full-time photographer, and two part-time photographers.[18] By 1963 it had six full-time photographers and five mobile units, four reporters, plus another reporter who was shared with radio. By then it had hired a meteorologist to forecast the weather, rather than just read the weather forecast from the National Weather Bureau. It had also installed its own film-processing equipment and hired a staff member to operate it. WTAE started with a staff of five in the newsroom, but by 1960 it had added three reporters and by the following year two photographers, although it still sent its film to an independent company for processing.

The ever-increasing use of film had assets and liabilities. The realization that television's great advantage was its visual capability had early spurred the effort to go beyond seeing just a reporter on-camera reading news copy. At first, visuals were still pictures, hand-held or mounted on an easel. Movietone film, flown in from New York, Washington, or Los Angeles, made still pictures appear as static as they were. Soon cameramen were shooting local stories on film until, by 1955, the combination of imported and local film shown on The World Tonight averaged about six minutes.[19] Considering that commercials filled at least three minutes of the fifteen-minute newscast, stories accompanied by film constituted about half the newscast. The use of film grew steadily. Obtaining film of local stories resulted in more attention to local news, rather than stories from abroad taken from the wire. But getting film of more stories also resulted in a tendency to devote less attention to presenting the background of each story. The filmed accounts, with narrative written to fit the pictures, could substitute for a more lengthy narrative complete with background and context.

The use of film in newscasts steadily became more sophisticated. The use of "A-roll, B-roll" is typical. Jim Berry said that although he did not invent the process he was the first to use it in Pittsburgh. He remembered that in an interview John Henry Johnson, a running-back for the Pitts-

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burgh Steelers, had described a touchdown. The description took about the same time as the film of the play itself.

> So I said, "Why don't we run them together? And then he can describe while we're watching what he did." It sounds so simple, but we just didn't do those kinds of things. We would've done the play and then, because we only had one projector, we'd have introduced film of John Henry Johnson talking about it. So we got a second projector, and from that we started using reversals to cover jump cuts and become more sophisticated.

Before that the process was relatively simple. "For a long time we just did single-chain, even packages. We would splice together the right amount of film, and the reporter would make an audiotrack, and they would play the audiotape the same time as the film." They learned, said Berry, by trial and error.

> Hit and miss. Screw it up, learn by error. Do it right the next time—sometimes by watching the competition, although I always thought we were ahead of the other two stations as far as film production. We had some good people and we kind of worked at it, tried to be avant-garde. We took chances and we did some things the other stations weren't doing.

The subsequent decade was a time of a steady escalation in television news, both at the network and on the local level. In 1962 Walter Cronkite replaced Douglas Edwards on The CBS Evening News, and the next year the program was expanded to thirty minutes, with the Huntley-Brinkley news on NBC soon following. Soon KDKA and WTAE had both expanded the noon and the early evening newscasts to thirty minutes. The turbulent events of the 1960s, beginning with the assassination of President Kennedy, certainly accelerated the public's interest in news, just as World War II had created a demand for news. Competition from two additional stations in Pittsburgh fueled the process. But the expansion of news in Pittsburgh was a natural growth that saw the forms and practices of the first decade refined as technology became more sophisticated, rather than fundamentally changed. Most of the conventions of local television news that are recognized today had been formed as that first decade came to an end.

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Conclusion

Local TV News Then and Now

Local television news is a part of broadcast markets all over the United States. Wherever you travel you can tune in to a newscast that closely resembles the newscasts you've seen back home. Moreover, local newscasts, with hard news, feature reports, and a heavy emphasis on sports and weather, look more like one another than like network news. Yet local newscasts have a sophistication that fits well with the general programming on commercial television. They have come a long way since those early years, when viewers were treated to the snowy image of an announcer seated behind a desk in front of a simple theatrical flat, reading copy into a microphone. Local newscasts have been transformed into today's dazzling display of sharp images in vivid colors, augmented by an overlay of graphics and narrated by reporters on the scene. The process has been so natural that it seems to have been inevitable. And viewers have come to take the conventions of local television news for granted.

Local news-gathering and broadcasting practices are taken for granted by

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professional journalists too. When a broadcast journalist reports to work in a local television news operation today, he or she knows what to expect.[1] A story will be assigned by the assignment editor, whose job it is to choose which stories will be covered in the day's newscast. The parameters for choosing from among the numerous story possibilities have been set by the news director (perhaps with input from management), and those parameters change from time to time, based on the perception of changing themes of public interest, and perhaps on advice from the station's professional consultants about what current audience research seems to be indicating.

Once the reporter has the assignment, he or she goes into the field with a videographer.[2] The assignment usually includes an appointment with a person or persons to interview, the interviews having been set up via telephone by "the desk"—the assignment desk. If our reporter asks, "What shall I do for pictures?" the desk's usual response will be "Oh, you'll think of something." And usually the story assigned will have some obvious picture possibilities or it probably would not have been assigned. Television news has a preference for people, events, and action—stories with more obvious pictures—rather than ideas, trends, and analyses. It's up to the reporter and the videographer to decide which pictures will best illustrate each story. Coming up with pictures can be the most difficult part of the assignment.

The basic theme of the story is generally known before the reporter leaves the newsroom. The interviews will fill in particulars, but the theme is part and parcel of the decision to cover the story in the first place. There may be a press release available, or a newspaper article or two, so the reporter seldom goes to an event without at least some general background on the story. Of course, reporters are expected to keep up with the news in general, and so they may have some notion of what the assigned story is and how it fits with the current news themes. The reporter's job is to get the right "talking heads" to fit the story line.

Although a reporter is expected to come back with a story that is faithful to the story line as assigned, details are left to his or her discretion. However, the story is often "framed" in advance by the reporter's view of political reality and by the way the story may have been framed in accounts in other news media.

It is not uncommon for reporters to draft the story in their head while in the car, on the way to the scene. The videographer will want to know what the story is about, in order to make decisions about what to shoot and how to shoot it. Both the reporter and the shooter understand the various ways to construct different kinds of stories, using conventions that are generally

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understood, if not consciously articulated, except in the language that news professionals speak. The final product is a news "package," which consists of a complete story narrated by the reporter, who may appear on camera during the package doing a "stand-up" on the scene. As the story is aired, viewers listen to the narration while watching pictures that have been carefully edited together to "tell the story," interspersed with "sound-bites" or "talking heads"—quick quotes by people the reporter interviewed, lending the flavor of authenticity and an aura of authority to the story.

Spot-news stories, such as a fire or auto fatality, are different. Because such stories are usually in response to monitoring the emergency radio, the reporter may know few facts before arriving at the scene, where the reporter will gather information, usually from fire or police officials. A reporter may ask "the desk" to get additional information about victims of the mishap—for instance, by calling a hospital. But even with spot news there are standard forms for telling the television story of a fire or accident. Both reporter and videographer know what to do on the scene to gather facts, sounds, and images in order to package the story for the newscast.

The television newscast itself is made up of a number of news packages, each introduced by a news anchor. The anchor, whose actual time on camera may be only a very few minutes, introduces the packages and narrates brief "voice-over" items. A half-hour newscast, minus commercial "spots," actually lasts about twenty-two minutes. Subtract the time devoted to sports and weather, and the time allotted for each news package, and just three or four minutes are left for the anchor. Yet news anchors are usually the most highly paid members of the news staff, for they are identified with the news. At one time it was not unusual to hear people say they "saw it on Cronkite" when what they meant was they saw it on CBS News. Each local station has at least one or two news anchors who personify the station.

The stories included in a newscast have been filtered through the selection process of the assignment desk. The available stories are shaped into a newscast by the news producer, whose job is to see that the program is organized by various themes in order to make the newscast "flow" naturally from one general topic to another, and to write continuity copy. It is not unusual to include a story that had previously been omitted, simply because that story now fits the emerging organizational pattern of the news. A long and complicated process of garnering events from a field of happenings in the community and arranging them for presentation culminates in a smooth, professional-looking newscast. The television news staff, using the language and conventions of the profession, can quickly communicate a host of

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understandings and prepare a daily newscast in a relatively short period of time. Television journalists assume that because they have followed the conventions of their profession they have presented an objective account of reality. Most viewers accept news conventions also, for the most part uncritically and unconsciously.

Despite what journalists and viewers take for granted, however, newscasts are a highly constructed version of reality. This is not to say that reporters consciously mislead the public by slanting the news, or that news is deliberately false. "News is not fictional," Michael Schudson reminds us, "but it is conventional."[3] The conventions play a subtle but definite role in shaping what becomes television news. Broadcast journalists do not create the events they cover, but the events that *are* covered and the *way* those stories are shaped by television reporters is a *construction* of reality that is based on the conventions of broadcast journalism.

Television news was not created out of nothing. There was a tradition of journalism that was the matrix for television news, and many of today's conventions grew out of that tradition. One medium that had a direct influence on television news was radio, from which came announcers who know how to do news in the broadcast style. The emphasis was on the narrative form, and stories were organized by theme, which became the basis for deciding which stories to include and exclude. The narrative style was personal and conversational, sometimes dramatic, and seemed natural for television news.

The conventions inherited from radio included the traditional news sources of radio: first newspapers and wire services, then official press conferences, news releases from corporate officials, and police and fire radio scanners. As radio changed in response to the proliferation of independent radio stations, the new emphasis on active news-gathering had an influence on television as well. As technology made it possible to record pictures and interviews, local news looked increasingly to official sources of information and convenient video. Edited images, first on film and later on videotape, increasingly made the slice of reality presented by television news appear to be reality itself—the "way it really is"—rather than a reflection of the sources from which news was gathered.

A second source for television news was the motion picture newsreel, where an announcer narrated to match the pictures on film. From the beginning, "telling a story" seemed the natural way to do television news with pictures. When Bill Beal went out in the first days to do Pitt Parade

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with a rented movie camera, it was to report on a murder he had read about in a newspaper: "I shot the house, I shot the alley where the girl was supposed to have been carried, I shot the back steps, and I made up a story." Capturing images on film to edit into news form seemed to demand a narrative, a "story."

The newsreel form influenced television news by bringing to television the syntax and grammar of motion pictures as a primary means of telling a story. Adopting the language of film, with its conventional fictive devices for compressing time—using the techniques of filming and editing to make the product appear seamless, and telling a story with a beginning, middle, and end—intensified the dramatic elements of television news. Television news uses many of the techniques Hollywood filmmakers use to condense an event that took place over many hours into a news story of no longer than a minute or two. Constructing a news story is very much like making a miniature movie. As new technology became available, the dramatic elements were intensified and the seamless news story appeared to be synonymous with reality itself. The interpretative techniques of film came to be accepted as the way of doing television news.

In all television news stories, cinematic considerations play an important role. Even simple interviews require locations with foregrounds and backgrounds that lend interpretation. Cutaway shots and insert shots are used to edit the story with visual unity. Natural lighting is often augmented with artificial light, and ambient sound is sometimes added to video to give the "feel of reality." The selection of camera angles is necessarily interpretive, and the editing process is inescapably interpretive.

"The process of alternating between the long shot and close-up aspects of a program is possibly the most important element in the communicative language of both film and television," one television production text points out. That principle can be attributed to the work of Edwin Porter and D. W. Griffith in the early motion picture days.[4] Those film pioneers soon discovered that "when one picture is immediately replaced by another, an interaction occurs in the mind of the viewer that communicates something more than if each picture were viewed separately."[5] The juxtaposition of wide shots with medium shots and close-ups involves decisions about the meaning of events. High-angle shots convey a distinct perspective, while low-angle shots are considered "heroic." Without a comparison shot, the scale of a scene is difficult to determine. Pans and tilts and zooms can convey meanings quite different from what other types of shots show; fade-ins and fade-outs communicate meaning as well.

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All these conventions developed as television photographers rediscovered the principles that motion-picture pioneers had discovered decades before, and adapted them for television.

In order to have filmed accounts of local news events, the news staff was increased. News directors, assignment editors, producers, photographers, editors, and reporters joined forces to provide a fuller and more visual look to the news. A reporter on the news set to introduce each story became an "anchor," a metaphor based on the anchor runner on a track team. Seen night after night introducing news stories rather than reporting the news, the anchors became television personalities, drawing both audiences and news sources. What began to look like what today we recognize as normative for television news was part of an evolutionary process that began as soon as television began to schedule newscasts. Near the end of the first decade, newscasts had settled into the rudimentary form that became what we now recognize as modern local news on commercial television in the United States.

Journalists have long contended that television makes news more immediate as an ever-improving technology narrows the time gap between gathering pictures and broadcasting the story. But immediacy denotes more than speed. It also means "free from the intervention of a medium, a direct presence." "Immediacy," in the sense of a narrowing time gap, cannot be equated with "immediacy" in the sense of the absence of the influence of the medium of television itself. Getting news stories on the air faster does not mean making the news more objective. Even "going live," as local television can now do, does not transcend the frame that television news conventions impose on reality.

A conscious obsession with immediacy—read as "speed"—has characterized television news from its inception. The script for the very first Pitt Parade includes the words "Remember, this happened this morning in Pittsburgh."[6] Each advancement in technology has been heralded as a way to make news broadcasting better by making it faster. Early television news was presented through the medium of film, a much faster medium than print. Stations installed their own expensive film-processing equipment because it was faster than taking the raw film to an independent company for processing. Each film crew could stay in radio contact not just with the assignment desk but also with the person who processed the film. Running a batch of film through the processor could be coordinated so that as reporters checked in from stories no film had to wait long to be developed. It was "electronic journalism," even when the pictures were gathered on film,

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and it had overcome the barriers to "mediated" news. Westinghouse said it in 1961, in their policy on "objective news": "The great virtue of electronic journalism is *immediacy,* ease of reception, and the vitality and dynamic quality that comes from the spoken word and moving visual images as compared to the printed word."[7]

Today the immediacy of television news is believed to have reached its apotheosis as the cumbersome technology of film has been replaced in modern television news by the more efficient ENG (Electronic News Gathering) and SNG (Satellite News Gathering). Broadcasting "live" from the scene has fostered the notion that television news is an objective account of reality. It is assumed that because television news can be broadcast directly from the scene it is therefore "immediate" in the sense of unfiltered through a medium. That assumption is illustrated in standard textbooks of television reporting that contrast the old film technology with the new electronic technology: "Even if the news staff turned itself inside out, what the audience saw was pictures and sound made *at the time the film was shot.* On that day for that event, the viewer got only one version, one slice of time.... With ENG and microwave or satellite signals, it is possible to take the audience to the scene of the event and to update on a minute-by-minute basis."[8] By taking the viewer "to the scene," it is argued, the mediating influence of the process is eliminated and the story now has "immediacy." Speeding up the process has therefore fostered the false notion that the "objectivity" problem has been eliminated.

The fact is that the news-gathering process has changed little since the end of the first decade. It has only become faster and more efficient, not essentially different. The introduction of videotape in the 1970s was another way to make news-gathering faster. As soon as the changeover from film to videotape was made, the expensive film-processing equipment was dismantled and sold, and the person who worked full-time doing nothing but processing film was retrained to edit videotape or run a camera. No longer did a news crew have to call in with their arrival time in order to schedule processing time for film. The videotape needed only to be rewound to be ready for broadcast. The microwave technology made it possible to eliminate the drive back to the station to get the pictures on the air, at least when the story was within a twenty-five-mile or so radius of the station. The videotaped pictures could be sent back to the station from a truck via microwave relay. One only had to be within range of the microwave tower.

A personal experience illustrates the process well. While working at WTAE-TV in Pittsburgh circa 1980, a news story came over the wire

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about an explosion in a chemical plant in West Virginia, just south of Pennsylvania and across the Ohio River from Ohio. I was sent, with a news crew, to report the story. Our news unit was a station wagon, which we drove southward rapidly, hoping to get the story back in time for the six o'clock newscast. As we drove into West Virginia we came to a roadblock staffed by a state police officer. We interviewed the officer in charge about his instructions to close the highway, then learned that the only way we could get pictures of the plant was to drive back to a bridge and cross the river into Ohio. If we drove south along the river we could see and "film"[9] the plant from the Ohio side. When we finally got the pictures we needed, including a "stand-up" by the river with the plant across the river in the background, we headed back to Pittsburgh, only to realize we would not be back in time for the newscast. A call to the station resulted in a plan for us to meet the microwave truck in a cemetery atop a hill in Washington, Pennsylvania.

When we arrived at the cemetery, on top of a very high hill, the truck was stuck in a snowdrift. But the operator had a link with the tower, so the videotape we had shot, along with a hastily scrawled narrative I had recorded, was microwaved from the antenna high atop the truck to the relay cone fastened to a tower on Mount Washington overlooking Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle, and on out to the station several miles away on the eastern outskirts of the city. There the raw material was edited together to make the story. We shoveled the truck out and drove down the hill to a restaurant there in Washington. As we sat down at a table, we were just in time to see our story lead the newscast.

Today the microwave truck would be a satellite truck. The meeting in Washington, midway from the scene to the station, would not be necessary, and neither would sending the videotape and narration to the station to be edited. The satellite truck would contain editing equipment so the finished piece could be transmitted directly to the station, or the satellite truck could transmit a picture live from the scene. But such a "live shot" is usually done with a single camera anchored in one spot. For some dramatic stories, such as a fire, a single camera may be sufficient, but for most stories a single camera, transmitting a picture of the reporter's talking head, is considered to be dull television. Both journalists and audience have come to expect more.

Because of the limitations of a single camera, live shots at most local stations are carefully produced and planned well in advance. In the vast majority of cases, for a live report from the scene the reporter spends hours

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with a crew, videotaping and editing. The live presentation usually consists of an anchor in the studio saying "Let's go live to so and so on the scene," with the reporter shown on the large monitor that has become standard for modern news sets. The reporter, who is certainly "live on the scene," updates the story with a few sentences and then introduces the packaged report. The introduction is done so subtly that it appears to be a continuation of the live report rather than a story previously taped and edited.

An entire report done live is unusual, and reserved for breaking and dramatic stories such as a hostage situation or a fire, where there is not enough time to get well-edited pictures. Television is only slightly less reluctant than radio to interrupt a soap opera for news, and most news events do not coincide with the time of a newscast. So even though today's technology provides for reporting live from the scene, reporters do not simply stand and talk. Instead, a report that has been carefully crafted earlier in the day is shown at the appointed newscast time. To put their story together, reporters use a process that is virtually the same as it was in the early years of television news: the camera still sees what the photographer sees; the pictures are shot with a chosen foreground and a background, which lends interpretation; the tape is carefully edited to give the story visual unity, with a variety of shots juxtaposed to give the story the "feel of reality." The conventions have not changed much. The packaged account played during the "live shot" compresses time, reducing an event that may have developed over hours to a minute or so. Thus, again, what may appear to be a simple "window on reality" is really a careful construction of reality.

Even special events, where there are cameras and reporters on location, and live shots interrupting regularly scheduled programs, are not free from the mediating influence of television news. Consider live coverage at party headquarters on election night. Once the decision about which candidates to cover "live" is made, a number of other decisions can influence the message viewers receive. The choice of where to put the live camera is usually a technical decision rather than a journalistic decision. When to interrupt the program flow to go live to the scene, except when a dramatic moment such as a concession speech occurs, is the function of programming rather than news. Conditions at most election headquarters are usually chaotic, with vote counts difficult to come by. It is quite common for the newsroom to have more reliable and recent information from a wire service than anyone at election headquarters. The reporter on the scene usually gets the latest information from his newsroom over the phone,

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relays it to a party spokesperson or candidate, and then during a live shot asks the spokesperson what the latest returns indicate. Quite often the spokesperson merely repeats the information just relayed to him or her by the reporter, as though the information is coming from election headquarters.

The conventions have become more sophisticated but are not radically altered. Television news does a better job of covering "breaking" stories or "spot news" faster and more efficiently, but "convenient video" is still a main concern, because newscasts are carefully planned in advance so the story can be reconstructed on videotape. "Immediacy," in the sense of "free from a mediating influence," is no closer with the new technologies. The presence of television news influences the events it covers. A videotape package is still defined to some extent by prior expectations—getting a satellite truck into position at a news location requires such advance planning. A fast-breaking story is still more the exception for local television news, rather than standard operating practice. Advance planning requires knowing what events to cover, and that necessitates using news sources that became standard in television's early days. In order to get a news crew to a location in time to package a story in the dramatic form that is standard practice for professionals and expectation of television viewers, planning is required.

It is hard to see how it could be any different. Looking at how and why the conventions of local television news were invented, as this case study does, is one way to understand the "invisible frame" television imposes on reality. Another way is to consider an alternate mode. The Public Broadcasting System's "MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour" began in 1976 with a half-hour format that focused on a single subject. It was more a public affairs discussion program than a news program. By 1983, however, it had been expanded to one hour, and the format included elements that made it more closely akin to a news program: news summaries, discussion, investigative reports, and opinion pieces.

The MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour begins with a summary of the day's news that usually lasts no more than eight or ten minutes. The summary includes video footage of some stories, but whether there is video does not affect what stories are included. If there is no video, an important story is simply read by an anchor in a manner reminiscent of earlier television news. Another element of the program is a discussion of one or two, even three, issues in the news. Issues discussed have usually had a high profile in recent news, but not necessarily that day. Guests for such discussions are chosen not according to a predetermined theme but to provide various points of

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view. This often results in sharp disagreement, sometimes expressed passionately but never with the chaotic exchange that characterizes some network discussion programs. Notable news sources appear on the program too, partly because opinion-makers watch but also because guests know they will have the time to explain their positions in more than quick sound-bites.

Investigative reports are part of the News Hour on a regular basis. Correspondents devote considerable time and effort to producing comprehensive reports, using many of the same conventions as local television news, but in a highly creative way that explains without oversimplifying. Paul Solmon, who often reports on business for the News Hour, is a prime example. One of his reports, on the effects that raising or lowering interest rates can have on business borrowing and spending, was more than thirteen minutes long. Using the conventions of television, including interesting video, talking heads, and extended stand-ups, Solmon's report gave viewers a complete picture of one aspect of financial reality. This type of treatment provides a more complete understanding than any series of discrete, episodic reports on daily events could ever achieve. While local news is picture-oriented, and the focus is therefore on the personalities, events, and action that provide for a quick-paced, video-saturated newscast that crowds many different "stories" into a short time, reports like Solmon's provide another perspective by attending to issues, themes, and trends—aspects that are not easily covered by convenient video or action pictures.

Opinion pieces that are part of the News Hour are well-constructed editorials that make considerable use of video to illustrate a point of view, rather than simply the talking head of a station spokesperson. These opinion pieces are presented by people who represent a wide variety of viewpoints and who have experts help them deliver their message in a sophisticated manner that utilizes the latest in video techniques. The pieces are presented in an entertaining way without yielding to the temptation to be titillating or sensational. They utilize the strength of television by employing a rich array of video to illustrate concepts, but not as substitutes for thoughtful analysis.

The MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour is not a commercial network program, of course. It is supported by the Public Broadcasting System. The comparatively low ratings of the program would make it difficult if not impossible to sustain in economic competition with other stations. But the elements included in the News Hour could be used in local news programming to shape reality in a way that is distinctively different from the usual focus on personalities, episodic events, and the happenstance of daily events and actions—that is, to provide the kind of interpretation and analysis that

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would give viewers a view of reality that goes beyond the impressionistic view created by the litany of daily happenings without much context. That would provide material that would stimulate citizens to think about public issues and to make the kinds of decisions they should be making in a participatory democracy.

When local television news originated, the competition came from newspapers, and television's edge was speed. As television won that race, newspapers were forced to adapt to the new competition, and over the last thirty years the newspapers have become more interpretive, have been using background pieces and features, and are including more specialist materials. Newspapers now increase their circulation by offering better-written, more-detailed stories, not by hawking headlines—in large part because television has taken over the function of providing news quickly that newspapers formerly fulfilled. Newspaper publishers gradually discovered that coverage of local stories, not more-detailed stories, was what built circulation figures. James Batten, president of Knight-Ridder, said recently:

> One of the sins of the newsrooms in middle-sized and larger cities has been that they had no interest in golden weddings and Eagle Scouts and chicken dinners. Nobody went to journalism school to write about some freckle-faced fourteen-year-old who's been made an Eagle Scout—but that's what built newspapers. We're going back to our roots.[10]

Local television news might find that going back to its roots—emulating the early era when news programs like Pitt Parade covered community events—would work for television too, but local television news seems to be going in the opposite direction. Richard Goedkoop concludes his book, *Inside Local Television News,*[11] with a look at the future based on the past, pointing out that the complexity and speed of modern technology make it possible for local news departments to send reporters to cover international events, such as summit meetings, and tragedies, such as hurricanes and airplane crashes in nearby states. He and many others expect local news to expand as network news diminishes. Local news stations can get the stories without depending on networks, and in many instances are already doing so. Such predictions simply assume that local television news will get bigger, faster, and more complex—but not fundamentally different. The more important question is whether local news can buck the trend toward doing news faster and flashier with the forms and practices that have become

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conventional, or whether it should abandon some of its conventions in order to present a more balanced version of reality and to provide citizens with a more adequate basis for making decisions as we move toward the twenty-first century.

What is inevitable is the inevitability of economics. Local television news must always struggle to compete for audience, because good ratings are considered to be the ultimate measure of "good television news." Because journalists do present news the way it has always been done, and the way audiences have come to expect, it is likely that expansion and acceleration of current practices, rather than change, will occur. As commercial television, which is the context for news and helps set audience expectations, becomes more exaggerated in its drive to entertain, television news will probably become more and more what Edward R. Murrow warned against in 1958, "an incompatible combination of show business, advertising and news."[12] Murrow's admonition has been repeated many times since. Ron Powers said, for example, "By the 1970s, an extravagant proportion of television news—local news in particular—answered less to the description of journalism than to that of show business."[13] "Frequently," said Neil Postman and Steve Powers, "it is a case of technique triumphing over substance."[14] Lance Bennett wrote a penetrating account of how the media mediate political reality, arguing convincingly that "the news provides, at best, a superficial and distorted image of society."[15] Television news gets faster and more efficient, but not necessarily better.

Local television news is not likely to change in any institutional way. The owners of television stations have a vested economic interest, which means they do not want to risk losing in the ratings by experimenting with new forms of news. The conventions of television news serve the political structure well, as Bennett illustrates. So the most realistic hope for change comes from helping young journalists understand that the historically determined conventions are not written in stone, that they can be altered. Understanding history is the first step toward being free from the limitations of those conventions. Enterprising journalists can help shape a continuing evolution of television news, and shape it in new ways. Television news need not be a slave to the past, uncritically following the same processes that have been handed down from one generation to another.

Another step should be to teach all citizens to be video literate, beginning at the earliest ages. Reading illiteracy must be eliminated in our society, but so also must the video illiteracy that characterizes students today. Generations who have grown up with television as part of their daily

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diet accept what they see as reality. A favorite comment from students at the end of a course in television is "You've ruined television for me." They mean that they are now unable to watch television uncritically, to the extent that they are fooled by its illusions. It's a bit like explaining how the magician performs his tricks—it reduces the "reality" of magic to the more mundane reality of everyday life. Taking the magic out of television news will help create citizens who are better informed and better able to evaluate the "reality" constructed by television news.

A look back at how local television news developed, and at the historical forces that shaped its conventions, can be a step in the direction of consciousness-raising, for both television journalists and viewers alike. If that is the case, the look back can also help illuminate the road ahead.

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Appendix A

Oral History Interviews

Quotations in the text, unless otherwise noted, are from the interviews listed below. These oral history interviews are archived at Hillman Library, University of Pittsburgh.

Bill Adler	August 3, 1989	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Bob Battenfelter	March 3, 1989	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Bill Beal	August 15, 1988	Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania
Jim Berry	July 26, 1989	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Charles "Chuck" Boyle	February 25, 1989	Chicago, Illinois
Bill Brandt	August 4, 1990	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Fred DeFiore	August 16, 1989	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Richard Dreyfuss	March 3, 1989	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
George Eisenhauer	November 2, 1990	Ridgefield, New Jersey
Win Fanning	March 4, 1989	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Donovan Faust	March 11, 1989	Nashville, Tennessee
Jay Gould	August 16, 1989	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Rita Gould	February 27, 1989	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Bill Hinds	February 26, 1989	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Larry Israel	March 18, 1989	Chevy Chase, Maryland
Jacques Kahn	August 2, 1988	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Ron Kaiser	August 3, 1988	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Paul Long	August 16, 1989	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Al McDowell	August 20, 1990	State College, Pennsylvania
Charlie McGrath	August 16, 1989	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Dan Mallinger	March 3, 1989	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Jack Mitchell	February 28, 1989	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Dave Murray	August 9, 1988	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

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Richard Pack	April 18, 1991	New York, New York
Nick Perry	March 3, 1989	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Dick Roebling	May 16, 1992	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Florence Manson Sando	July 9, 1993	Riverdale, New York
Eleanor Schano	March 2, 1989	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Ed Schaughency	August 17, 1988	Gibsonia, Pennsylvania
Ray Scott	June 4, 1989	Minneapolis, Minnesota
Jim Snyder	January 25, 1991	Bethesda, Maryland
Bob Stevenson	August 16, 1988	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
George Thomas	August 11, 1988	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

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Appendix B

"Pit Parade" Rates

Bill Beal gave a document to potential advertisers in the early months of "Pitt Parade," describing what they would get for their $285.50 each week. The document, which Beal saved, was laid out and reads as follows:

"PITT PARADE"

THE PICTURE STORY OF THE PITTSBURGH SCENE

PACKAGED PROGRAMS, INC.
211 SMITHFIELD STREET
PITTSBURGH 22, PA.
GRANT 4756

[page one]

"PITT PARADE"

A — "Pitt Parade" provides the opportunity for an advertiser to pioneer in television over station WDTV-DuMont.

Here is a chance to be among the *first* to advertise on television thru the medium of the most powerful and appealing entertainment vehicle available.

Packaged Programs, Inc., Pittsburgh's pioneer television producers, presents a nightly feature called "PITT PARADE"—a program of local news featuring local events, local personalities, local human-interest stories.

PITT PARADE is photographed and telecast the same day.

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This is possible because of an exclusive rapid developing process. "Pitt Parade" is telecast each evening after the network shows from New York and Chicago, as an "end of the evening" news summary.

B — Only a selected group of local non-competing advertisers have the opportunity to become Pittsburgh's pioneer television advertisers.

You have the opportunity to join the ranks of progressive organizations which have faith in the most miraculous advertising medium in history— TELEVISION. You can do so on a modest budget that permits you to get full value for every penny expended.

C — Here are the reasons why *you* should be interested in becoming a pioneer television advertiser in Pittsburgh:

1. The prestige and publicity assets of being among the first to sponsor a regular television program in this community are in themselves valuable factors for publicity and public relations operations.

2. The opportunity to bring to Pittsburgh the interesting and dramatic story of their own city, the lives of its people, highlight events, big stories and small.

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3. An opportunity to develop compelling commercial messages thru the magic of motion pictures, about your business, your services, your products.

4. The chance to be on the ground floor in Pittsburgh as television continues its phenomenal growth as the most profound social force in history.

5. You become the sponsor of a 5 minute segment of timely, filmed, local news in "Pitt Parade," a

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feature which will immediately follow the finest television programs on the air which come to viewers over the coaxial cable from other cities.

6. Your commercials will be filmed according to your specifications, and included in "Pitt Parade."
7. You may change your television commercials each week, or retain the same commercial for a period of weeks.
8. Your sponsorship will be promoted thru planned promotional endeavors which will identify you as a pioneer television advertiser.
9. You will have the opportunity to continue your sponsorship of "Pitt Parade" after the initial 10 weeks—at a special pioneer price.
10. Your pioneer participation will be the subject of a special publicity story planned for early release to national publications as part of a television promotion campaign for Pittsburgh.

D — This is what you get!

1. *Air time* on WDTV—DuMont's Pittsburgh station
2. *Sponsorship identification* on *every* "Pitt Parade"
3. *A full minute commercial* one day per week
4. *Your commercials filmed* to your specifications (This applies to subject matter used)
5. *Consistent promotion*

E — The above applies to all firm contracts signed prior to March 1st, 1949. Package price includes *all costs* — there are no hidden extras.

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F — Here are some factors which should be carefully considered:

1. Television has made tremendous progress

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in a short period of time. It will make
tremendous progress in Pittsburgh.

(In Atlanta, Ga., over 10,000 television
sets were sold to Mr. and Mrs. Public
in 90 days.)

2. Television has the highest consumer response
ratio of any advertising medium.

(On November 14, 1949, [1948?] Emerson Radio
advertised a $30 gift certificate good
for the purchase of a $60 Emerson AM
radio set if the viewer ordered in 48 hours.
The result was 9,000 sets sold by deadline
and thousands more afterwards.)

3. Television is the most perfect mass sales device
yet conceived. And thru "Pitt Parade" you can
experiment to perfect your sales message.

G — You can audition "Pitt Parade" on any television set
any night—and see for your self what kind of a show it is.

Take time out to see it. Visualize your own commercials
coming over the air, just as the commercials are now
being presented for a number of "Pitt Parade" advertisers
now using this program.

Don't wait till it's too late—invest a portion
of your advertising budget in the medium that sells merchandise
better than any in existence!

[page 4]

What does "Pitt Parade" cost?

"Pitt Parade" is sold as a "package" which
includes all fees:

$285.50 per week

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Please note: Packaged Programs, Inc., has a number of television programs available for sponsorship including:

"Fashion Frills" – (Women appeal)

"Great Outdoors" – (Family)

"Adventure" – (General)

"Mr. Rumple Bumple" – (Children)

Call on us for the production of television spots, programs, or scripting.

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Notes

Introduction. TV News: A Window on Reality

1. Robert St. John, *Encyclopedia of Radio and Television Broadcasting* (Milwaukee, Wisc., 1967), pp. 26-29; Sidney W. Head and Christopher H. Sterling, *Broadcasting in America: A Survey of Electronic Media,* 5th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), p. 50. See also Erik Barnouw, *A Tower in Babel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 19-21; and George H. Douglas, *The Early Days of Radio Broadcasting* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, 1987), pp. 6-7.

2. W. Rupert Maclaurin, *Invention and Innovation in the Radio Industry* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1949), p. 61. For a detailed account of Fessenden's work, see ibid., pp. 59-70. (Lee DeForest's triode or audion tube is considered the greatest invention in radio.)

3. Conrad, who did not have a high school education, went on to hold more than 200 patents and received an honorary degree from the University of Pittsburgh in 1928.

4. Although it's referred to as the "Harding-Cox election," there were seven complete tickets on the ballot that year. In addition to Republican Warren G. Harding and Democrat James M. Cox, there was Socialist Eugene V. Debs, running from prison; prohibitionist Aaron S. Watkins; the Farmer-Labor party's Parley P. Christensen; the Socialist-Labor party's William Cox; and the Single-Tax candidate, R. C. McCauley. It is not known whether Rosenberg announced the returns for all seven or just for Harding and Cox. When NBC television covered election night in 1940, Rosenberg was brought in, along with Lowell Thomas, for the event.

5. *Pittsburgh Post,* November 2, 1920, p. 5.

6. The rector of Calvary Episcopal Church appeared on Westinghouse's first television station. When WBZ-TV made its initial broadcast in 1948, Dr. Edwin Jan Van Etten, then dean of Boston's St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, appeared to talk about his KDKA experience.

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7. One could argue for a Westinghouse connection, because Allen B. DuMont had won the Westinghouse award for the most outstanding accomplishment of any employee in 1927.

8. To catch something of the optimism about the coming of television at that time, see "Curtain Goes Up on Television," *Business Week,* May 6, 1939, p. 15.

9. Three stations were in New York City, two each in Chicago and Los Angeles, and one each in Philadelphia and Schenectady, New York. See "The TVs That Blazed the Trail," *Broadcasting,* November 2, 1970, pp. 154-60.

10. The FCC had forced NBC to sell one of its two radio networks in 1943, but it was not until 1945 that NBC's old "Blue Network" was renamed the American Broadcasting Company, to become the fourth television network.

11. William A. Henry III, "News as Entertainment: The Search for Democratic Unity," in Elie Abel, ed., *What's News: The Media in American Society* (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1981), p. 155.

12. Herbert W. Land Associates, "Television and the Wired City" (Washington, D.C.: National Association of Broadcasters, 1968), pp. 175-80. This "Land Report" was the NAB's attempt to ensure the primacy of broadcast television over cable and must be read with that in mind.

13. Daniel C. Hallin, "Cartography, Community, and the Cold War," in Robert Karl Manoff and Michael Schudson, eds., *Reading the News* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), p. 118.

14. While few of the 600 low-power television stations or the 10,000 local cable systems produce any news, that may be changing.

15. Jim Snyder, "Happy News and Other Modern Myths," *TV Quarterly,* Fall 1987, p. 48.

16. Quoted in Max Wilk, *The Golden Age of Television: Notes from the Survivors* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1976), p. xii.

17. John Fiske and John Hartley, *Reading Television* (London: Methuen, 1978), p. 17.

18. Jerry Jacobs, *Changing Channels: Issues and Realities in Television News* (Mountain View, Calif.: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1990), p. 25.

19. The case study has substantial precedents. An early example was the study of a parade in Chicago for General Douglas MacArthur, contrasting eyewitness accounts with those who saw the parade on television and concluding: "Television has its own special biases; and 'electronic participation' is something clearly different from direct participation." Kurt Lang and Gladys Engel Lang, *Politics and Television* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), pp. 36-77. The Lang study also included the 1952 political conventions and the 1960 Kennedy-Nixon debates. A classic case study was David Manning White's on gatekeeping, dealing with how one editor selected stories ("The Gatekeeper: A Case Study in the Selection of News," *Journalism Quarterly* 27 [Fall 1950],

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383). Warren Breed used a single case to study how social relationships in the newsroom influenced coverage ("Social Control in the News Room? A Functional Analysis," *Social Forces* 33 [May 1955], 326). James Lynch studied the way one television series, "All in the Family," was produced ("Seven Days with 'All in the Family,'" *Journal of Broadcasting* 17 [1973], 259). Many accounts of media institutions can be classified as case studies. A prominent example is Gary Paul Gates's study of CBS News from Edward R. Murrow to Walter Cronkite: *Air Time: The Inside Story of CBS News* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978). Case studies have also analyzed the contents of a news source during a particular period. See Walter Lippmann and Charles Merz, "A Test of the News," *New Republic,* August 4, 1921, suppl., pp. 1-42.

20. Bryan Jay Bashin, "How TV Stations Are Trashing History," *Columbia Journalism Review,* May-June 1985, pp. 51-54.

21. The double-system package used two projectors. Usually "talking heads" were on projector "A" while pictures of the action or scene were on projector "B." The director had a "rundown" that contained information about when to switch from one projector to the other. The author recalls being told: "I just tossed out rolls of film that had some of the stories you did in the early 1970s." However, because the written "run-down instructions" have long been destroyed, the news stories could not be reconstructed even if the raw film had not been discarded.

22. Kenneth Mrozinski, "News and Public Affairs Practices of the Three Pittsburgh Commercial Television Stations" (master's thesis, West Virginia University, 1965), p. 4.

23. W. Lance Bennett, *News: The Politics of Illusion,* 2d ed. (New York: Longman, 1988), p. xiii.

24. John P. Robinson and Mark R. Levy, *The Main Source: Learning from Television News* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1986).

25. Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda* (New York: Knopf, 1965), p. 87.

26. See Mark Fishman, *Manufacturing the News* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), p. 77, for an expanded version of this concept.

27. See Dan Schiller, *Objectivity and the News: The Public and the Rise of Commercial Television* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), pp. 1-11.

28. Paul H. Weaver, "Is Television News Biased?" *The Public Interest* 26 (Winter 1972), 73.

29. A useful summary is provided by Allan Rachlin, *News as Hegemonic Reality: American Political Culture and the Framing of News Accounts* (New York: Praeger, 1988), pp. 1-4.

30. James W. Carey, "The Dark Continent of American Journalism," in Manoff and Schudson, *Reading the News,* p. 159.

31. What Kristine Brunovska Kamick said in her study of the NBC network

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is equally valid for local news: "The formats of network news today are historically determined and owe a great deal to the flexibility and experimentation of its first decade." They were not the result of "a series of deliberate and conscious steps leading to the present." Kristine Brunovska Kamick, "NBC and the Innovation of Television News, 1945–1953," *Journalism History* 15 (Spring 1988), 26.

32. Quincy Howe, *The News and How to Understand It, in Spite of the Newspapers, in Spite of the Magazines, in Spite of the Radio* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1940), p. 3.

33. Carey, "Dark Continent of American Journalism," p. 159.

34. Schiller, *Objectivity and the News,* p. 1.

35. Erik Barnouw, "Foreword," in William Adams and Fay Schreibman, eds., *Television Network News: Issues in Content Research* (Washington, D.C.: George Washington University Press, 1978), p. 2.

36. Maury Green, *Television News: Anatomy and Process* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1969), p. 230.

37. Phyllis Kaniss, *Local News* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 7.

38. Leon V. Sigal, "Sources Make the News," in Manoff and Schudson, *Reading the News,* p. 18.

39. Robert Karl Manoff, "Writing the News (By Telling the 'Story')," in Manoff and Schudson, *Reading the News,* p. 197.

40. Theodore Glasser describes this as "juxtaposing conflicting truth-claims, where truth-claims are reported as 'fact' regardless of their validity" ("Objectivity and News Reporting," in Elliot D. Cohen, ed., *Philosophical Issues in Journalism* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1992], p. 178).

41. Janet E. Steele, "Why Do Television's Academic Experts so Often Seem Predictable and Trivial?" *Chronicle of Higher Education,* January 3, 1990, p. B2.

42. Tom Koch calls this practice "a powerful propaganda tool for the maintenance of the status quo and an organ of the literate and elite" (*News as Myth: Fact and Context in Journalism* [New York: Greenwood Press, 1990], p. 14). Bennett ("News," p. xiv) adds that the mass media simply pass along "the daily garble of political debate, fearful threats, and the stream of sometimes threatening, sometimes reassuring, public-relations images pumped out by governments and powerful political organizations." Henry ("News as Entertainment," p. 35) agrees that television news upholds the status quo in its effort to be scrupulously objective, "which means it does not challenge the prevailing biases of a predominantly white, Judeo-Christian, imperial, internationalist, capitalist society."

43. Weaver, "Is Television News Biased?" p. 67.

44. Green, *Television News,* p. 86.

45. Ibid., p. 41.

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46. Weaver, "Is Television News Biased?" p. 68.
47. Manoff and Schudson, in *Reading the News,* p. 5.
48. Green, *Television News,* pp. 173-74.
49. Professionalism in television news includes personal appearance as well as the hands-on skills of writing, shooting, editing, and producing. At the heart of the matter, however, is the ability to reduce reality to story form. "A lot of television news can be considered a process of forming and telling little stories. Condensing the complexities of an event and relating it in an interesting and credible manner is far more difficult than it appears. It's a talent highly prized by most news directors." Carl Filoreto with Lynn Setzer, *Working in TV News: The Insider's Guide* (Memphis, Tenn.: Mustang Publishing Company, 1993), p. 96.
50. Robert O. Blanchard and William G. Christ, *Media Education and the Liberal Arts: A Blueprint for the New Professionalism* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1993), p. x.
51. Joyce Nelson, "TV Formulas: Prime-Time Glue," in Arthur Asa Berger, ed., *Media USA: Process and Effect* (New York: Longman, 1988), p. 185.
52. Ibid.
53. John Cawelti, *Adventure Mystery and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 8.

Chapter 1. WDTV Channel 3

1. George Douglas says simply that "radio was firmly but gently eased aside" (*Early Days of Radio Broadcasting,* p. 208), while Giraud Chester and Garnet Garrison note that after network radio had its top year in 1948 "the future of AM radio became clouded with uncertainty" (*Television and Radio: An Introduction* [New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1956], p. 37).
2. For a fuller account of the use of radio in the home, see Francis Chase Jr., *Sound and Fury: An Informal History of Broadcasting* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942), pp. 59ff.
3. Peter Fortunale and Joshua E. Mills, *Radio in the Television Age* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1980), p. 1.
4. David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Villard Books, 1993), p. 184.
5. The words of Virginia Payne are quoted in John Dunning, *Tune in Yesterday: The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Old Time Radio, 1925-1976* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976), p. 385, but to appreciate the emotional content of her words one must listen to them on tape. Three other soaps to leave the air that day were "Young Doctor Malone" and "The Right to Happiness," after twenty-one years, and "The Second Mrs. Burton," after fourteen years.

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6. "Television and Radio Set New Records," *Broadcasting,* October 16, 1950, p. 159.

7. William L. O'Neill, *American High: The Years of Confidence, 1945–1960* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), is typical of a number of books that describe the period in these terms.

8. Paul White, *News on Air* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1947), p. 371.

9. Gary Newton Hess, "An Historical Study of the DuMont Television Network" (Ph.D. thesis, Northwestern University, 1960), p. 78.

10. William Boddy, *Fifties Television: The Industry and Its Critics* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), p. 30.

11. Manufacturers *did* make money on the sale of equipment. *Radio and Television Retailing,* January 1945, reported that by the end of 1943 the purchase of radios amounted to an original cost of more than two trillion dollars. Charles A. Siepmann, *Radio's Second Chance* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Company, 1946), p. 159.

12. Chase, *Sound and Fury,* p. 289.

13. Siepmann, *Radio's Second Chance,* p. 240.

14. For a more detailed discussion of the advantages of FM, see Chester and Garrison, *Television and Radio,* pp. 38–40; and Lawrence D. Longley, "The FM Shift in 1945," *Journal of Broadcasting* 12 (Fall 1968), 353–65.

15. E. G. Krasnow and L. D. Longley, *The Politics of Broadcasting Regulation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), p. 86.

16. Ibid., p. 85.

17. As of 1949, 91 percent of the FM stations on the air were owned by AM operators. See Charles A. Siepmann, *Radio, Television, and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 58.

18. Other stations cited the high costs of construction for FM and for television. See "Jersey City FM Station Suspends," *Broadcasting-Telecasting,* November 8, 1948, p. 63.

19. "Transit Radio Anniversary," *Broadcasting,* July 24, 1950, p. 52.

20. "Transit Radio," *Broadcasting,* February 13, 1950, p. 47.

21. "Transit Radio Growth," *Broadcasting,* April 24, 1950, p. 24.

22. Ibid., p. 52.

23. For a detailed account of the legal battles of Transit Radio, see R. L. Beard, "The Short Unhappy Life of Transit Radio," *Journal of Broadcasting* 12 (Fall 1977), 327–40.

24. *The First Fifty Years of Broadcasting* (Washington, D.C.: Broadcasting Publications, 1982), p. 112.

25. Sidney Lohman, "One Thing and Another," *New York Times,* July 7, 1946, sec. 2, p. 7.

26. For a fuller discussion of theater television, see Boddy, *Fifties Television* (above, note 10), pp. 18–24.

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27. "Phonevision Soon, Says Zenith," *Broadcasting,* July 26, 1948, p. 36.
28. Ibid.
29. Phonevision was designed to operate by broadcasting a scrambled signal. Each customer had a box on the television set that was connected to the telephone. By calling a special operator, you could get a "key signal" sent through the telephone line at a level above the voice band, which unscrambled the picture. The charge was simply added to the customer's regular telephone bill. See Robert V. Bellamy Jr., "Constraints on a Broadcast Innovation: Zenith's Phonevision System, 1931-1972," *Journal of Communication* 38 (Autumn 1988), 8-20.
30. "Pay-As-You-View TV," *Variety,* February 2, 1949, p. 13.
31. P. Koury, "Phonevision Issue," *New York Times,* 1950, sec. 2, p. 5.
32. *First Fifty Years of Broadcasting,* p. 102.
33. See Allan David Larson, "Integration and Attempted Integration Between the Motion Picture and Television Industries Through 1956" (Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio University, 1979), pp. 157-63, for a detailed discussion of the relationship between subscription television and the motion picture industry. Two other subscription systems were tested after Phonevision: Telemeter, which proposed an over-the-air delivery system with the signal unscrambled by putting a coin in a box, and Subscribervision, which used both wire and broadcast with the signal unscrambled by inserting a perforated card.
34. Robert V. Bellamy, in his study of Phonevision, "Zenith's Phonevision: A Historical Case Study of the First Pay Television System" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1985), posits the internal operation of the company as another contributing factor. Eugene F. McDonald, as both majority stockholder and company president, decided to tie up company resources to promote FM in the mid-1940s, leaving Zenith behind in the manufacture of television sets. While McDonald conducted a publicity campaign, arguing that television would not develop without a way to fund it through direct consumer payment, other companies sold sets and acquired the means of sustaining advertising-supported television until it became profitable. McDonald also refrained from cooperating with other plans for Pay TV, thus preventing a unified front in the political battle.
35. KDKA had some experience with "air-borne transmission," having evidently experimented with using a balloon as a radio transmitter. See the photo in St. John, *Encyclopedia of Radio and Television Broadcasting* (above, Introduction, note 1), p. 45.
36. "New Radio Concept," *New York Times,* August 10, 1945, p. 17.
37. Ibid.
38. Maclaurin, *Invention and Innovation in the Radio Industry,* p. 222.
39. *First Fifty Years of Broadcasting,* p. 86.
40. "New Radio Concept," pp. 17-18.

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41. Evidently the B-29 was owned by the Air Force. The record shows that "B-29B,s/n 44-84121" was assigned to the Air Materiel Command at Baltimore Municipal Airport from March 1947 through May 1949, so during the Stratovision tests it was apparently owned by the U.S. Air Force. Thus, the military took an early interest in the technology of transmitting television signals via aircraft. Archie Difante, Archives Branch, Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, personal communication to author, March 21, 1994.
42. "Stratovision Clicks," *Broadcasting,* June 7, 1948, p. 69.
43. "Stratovision," *Broadcasting,* June 14, 1948, p. 22.
44. "Stratovision to Get Spectacular Prevue," *Broadcasting,* June 21, 1948, p. 72.
45. "Stratovision's Debut," *Broadcasting,* June 28, 1948, p. 27.
46. Ibid., p. 28.
47. "Stratovision: Its Commercial Use Sought," *Broadcasting,* August 16, 1948, p. 75.
48. "Skyborn TV: Mixed Results in Day Test," *Broadcasting,* January 10, 1949, p. 22.
49. "Stratovision: Washington IRE Hears Nobles," *Broadcasting,* June 20, 1949, p. 34.
50. Quoted in "Skyborn TV: Mixed Results in Day Test," p. 22.
51. William Fall, personal communication to author, February 26, 1991.
52. William Kroll, personal communication to author, February 26, 1991.
53. James Potter, personal communication to author, February 26, 1991.
54. Cecil B. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988), p. 243.
55. T. W. Hoffer and L. W. Lichty, "Republic of Vietnam," *Broadcasting in Asia and the Pacific: A Continental Survey of Radio and Television,* ed. J. A. Lent (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978), p. 99.
56. Ibid.

Chapter 2. "Pitt Parade"

1. *Pittsburgh Press,* January 11, 1949, p. 55.
2. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* January 13, 1949, p. 1.
3. The story (unconfirmed) is that Stewart, an equipment salesman with DuMont, had lost by drawing the short straw and was consigned to Pittsburgh to get WDTV started.
4. *Broadcasting,* August 26, 1950, p. 62. WBAP-TV (now KXAS-TV) in Dallas, Texas, began with an all-film newscast in 1948 that continued into the 1970s.

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5. According to Bill Beal, who left the company in 1952, that financial arrangement, with Packaged Programs selling its own commercials, continued for at least three years.

6. Raymond Fielding, *The American Newsreel, 1911-1967* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), p. 3.

7. Ibid., p. 4.

8. Ibid., p. 229.

9. Pitt Parade Film Scripts, January 12, 1949, KDKA News Archives, Archives of Industrial Society, University Library System, University of Pittsburgh.

10. *Pitt Parade,* January 13, 1949.

11. *Pitt Parade,* January 26, 1949.

12. *Pittsburgh Press,* January 14, 1949, p. 41.

13. *TV Guide and Digest,* July 25, 1953, pp. 16-17, 36.

14. Ibid., p. 17.

15. Ibid., p. 36.

16. Ibid., p. 16.

17. Boddy, *Fifties Television* (above, Chapter 1, note 10), p. 72.

Chapter 3. On-Camera News

1. Bill Adler was working at an advertising agency at the time. "The agencies of Pittsburgh—and they were big agencies—didn't believe television was here to stay," he said. "They had to be convinced that television was a medium for advertising." Adler saw this as an opportunity to launch a television magazine with feature articles and TV listings, which would have circulation numbers that would convince advertisers that people were watching the new medium. The original name of the magazine, *Television News,* was soon changed to *TV Digest.* Rita Gould, who joined Adler six months after the magazine began and who retired forty years later as local editor of *TV Guide,* recalled the hectic beginning: "When I went to Adler for a job, I guess I was naive and innocent. I thought I was going to something like *Time* magazine. There was this hole in the wall down on Penn Avenue, and Bill had just started the magazine. And he said he sure could use me but he couldn't afford me, and would I be interested in part-time? Well, I think I worked one week part-time, and at the end of the week, when he gave me my paycheck, he said, 'I don't know how we got along without you. I still can't afford to pay you but if this thing goes, you'll go right with it.' So I started to work full-time and in those days full-time was—you know, we didn't know what hours were. We worked Saturdays, Sundays, because we did everything ourselves. They were real exciting times." The thing went. Bill Adler would sell *TV Digest* to Triangle Publications and retire in 1962. He sold to Walter Annenberg, whose *TV Guide,* with regional

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editions, became the most successful magazine of the 1950s. Adler described the process: "They would furnish us the wraparound—that was the editorial stuff—and we would put together the local scheduling. That was on a franchise, a cost-plus. It was one of the most unusual things in business. I don't think anybody ever did it. When we entered this contract, both of us started to make money." When Annenberg's Triangle Publications added Adler's magazine as a franchise, Pittsburgh was the eighth largest television market in the nation, and the local magazine had the third largest circulation in Pittsburgh. When Adler sold outright in 1962, his was the next-to-last franchise that Annenberg purchased outright.

2. *Pittsburgh Television News* 1, no. 1 (November 25–December 1, 1950).

3. Quoted in Si Steinhauser, "WDTV Takes Steps to Eliminate Bad Shows," *Pittsburgh Press,* January 4, 1951, sec. 2, p. 41.

4. The discs, recorded at 33⅓, were called "electrical transcriptions" and were so identified on the air. They were quite different from the 78 rpm phonograph records of that day.

5. The exception, of course, was "Pitt Parade," which flourished as it was moved to a more popular time slot.

6. Thomas's first broadcast on American radio was in 1925 over KDKA, when he talked for an hour on "Man's First Flight Around the World." See Ray Poindexter, *Golden Throats and Silver Tongues: The Radio Announcers* (Conway, Ark.: River Road Press, 1978), p. 52.

7. Harry Bannister, *The Education of a Broadcaster* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1965), p. 129.

8. Harry G. Bright, *I Lived on Air for Forty Years* (Parsons, W.Va.: McClain Printing Company, 1981), p. 8.

9. Howe, *The News and How to Understand It* (above, Introduction, note 32), p. 169.

10. Of the total broadcast time on NBC in 1939, 3.6 percent was devoted to news. By 1944 that had increased to 20.4 percent. See Oscar Theodore Barck Jr. and Nelson Manfred Blake, *Since 1900: A History of the United States in Our Times,* 5th ed. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1974), p. 574.

11. Bannister, *Education of a Broadcaster,* p. 182.

12. A good account of the major commentators is in Irving E. Fang, *Those Radio Commentators* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1977).

13. Tom Lewis, *Empire of the Air: The Men Who Made Radio* (New York: Edward Burlingame Books, 1991), p. 1.

14. There are a number of accounts of Morrison's *Hindenburg* "broadcast." See, for example, Poindexter, *Golden Throats and Silver Tongues,* pp. 150–52; and Edward Bliss Jr., *Now the News: The Story of Broadcast Journalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 36–38.

15. Howe, *The News and How to Understand It,* p. 169.

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16. Ibid., p. 17.
17. Henry L. Ewbank and Sherman P. Lawton, *Broadcasting: Radio and Television* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), p. 413.
18. Chester and Garrison, *Television and Radio* (above, Chapter 1, note 1), p. 405.
19. Quoted in Max Wilk, *Golden Age of Television* (above, Introduction, note 16), p. xii.
20. Ibid., p. 259.
21. See Boddy, *Fifties Television* (above, Chapter 2, note 17), pp. 93-95.
22. *TV Digest,* September 24, 1951.

Chapter 4. News at Eleven

1. See Bliss, *Now the News* (above, Chapter 3, note 14), p. 209.
2. *TV Digest,* August 23, 1952.
3. The first Eisenhower press conference allowed to be filmed did not come until January 19, 1955. See Carolyn Smith, *Presidential Press Conferences: A Critical Approach* (New York: Praeger, 1990), p. 37. Because Murray had long departed WDTV, his memory was faulty on that detail.
4. *TV Digest,* September 27, 1952.

Chapter 5. News with Pictures

1. A detailed account of car radios can be found in George H. Douglas, *Early Days of Radio Broadcasting* (above, Chapter 1, note 1), pp. 50-51.
2. Radio's problems would continue to come, not just from television but also from the growth of radio itself, as more radio stations would be forced to compete for a slice of the audience. By 1952 there were 2,355 radio stations in the United States; by 1962 the number had grown to 5,710; by 1972 there were 7,120.
3. Emily Berke, "A Study of Radio News Broadcasts Since the Advent of Television" (master's thesis, The Pennsylvania State University, 1956).
4. KQV claims a start date of November 19, 1919, when it began broadcasting from a department store in order to sell radios, but without a commercial license. WJAS went on the air in 1921, WTAE in 1922, and WWSW in 1932.
5. WAMO, WEEP, and WPIT in Pittsburgh, WEDO and WIXZ in McKeesport, WBVP in Beaver Falls, WCXJ in Braddock, WBUT in Butler, WESA in Charleroi, and WCVI in Connellsville—all were licensed in this two-year period.

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6. Jim Snyder, quoted in *Communicator: Radio and Television News Directors Association,* May 1990, p. 18.

7. For a fuller account of WNEW, see Philip K. Eberly, *Music in the Air: America's Changing Tastes in Popular Music, 1920-1980* (New York: Hastings House, 1982), pp. 186-90.

8. "Feature of the Week," *Broadcasting,* November 7, 1949, p. 12.

9. Gates, *Air Time* (above, Introduction, note 19), p. 90.

10. Ibid., p. 272.

11. Bergen Evans hosted a DuMont network program called "Down You Go," which first appeared on the schedule in 1951, so it may have been the inspiration for Guest to Ghost. Down You Go, produced in Chicago, featured four panelists who would try to guess slogans or phrases from clues Evans gave. It fared much better than Guest to Ghost, lasting four years on DuMont and then appearing briefly on each of the other three networks. See Harry Castleman and Walter J. Podrazik, *Watching TV: Four Decades of American Television* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982), pp. 59-60.

12. Film equipment would become more compact and manageable, and then, as film was replaced by electronic news-gathering in the 1970s, photographers would again complain about bulky video equipment and the need for dollies.

13. Quoted in Stefan Lorant, *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City* (Lenox, Mass.: Author's edition, 1975), p. 12.

14. Av Westin of ABC News has this to say about the concept of happy-talk news: "Anchors and reporters were to get more 'involved' in their stories and were to 'care' about what they were talking about. Unfortunately, the concept quickly started to substitute show for substance." See Av Westin, *Newswatch: How TV Decides the News* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982), p. 210.

15. Win Fanning, "Radio and Television in Review," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* August 27, 1953, p. 26. "Long established" in those early days of television was not very long. The World Tonight had been on the air just one year.

16. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* September 3, 1954.

17. *Pittsburgh Press,* August 21, 1955, p. 9.

18. The data for this section are from a study done in 1965 by Kenneth Mrozinski, "News and Public Affairs Practices" (above, Introduction, note 22).

19. *Pittsburgh Press,* August 21, 1955, p. 9.

Conclusion. Local TV News Then and Now

1. One important cultural difference between the early years and now is that members of today's news staff, including reporters, videographers, and even news directors, are much more likely to include women and minorities. In

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fact, a local news director recently asked me, "Can't you send me some male graduates?"

2. Videographers have been heard to refer to themselves as shooters, photogs, cinematographers, and photojournalists, depending on the mood they're in. In smaller markets the reporter may do everything from driving the car to shooting and editing the story—that is, functioning as a "one-man band."

3. Michael Schudson, "The Politics of Narrative Form: The Emergence of News Conventions in Print and Television," *Daedalus* 111 (Fall 1982), 98.

4. Thomas D. Burrows, Donald N. Wood, and Lynne Schafer Gross, *Television Production: Disciplines and Techniques,* 4th ed. (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Publishers, 1989), p. 130.

5. Ibid., p. 289.

6. Pitt Parade Scripts, January 12, 1949, KDKA Archives.

7. *Westinghouse Broadcasting Company Presentation to the FCC,* "WBC Policy on Objective News," December 1961, p. 27. Quoted in Mrozinski, "News and Public Affairs Practices" (above, Chapter 5, note 18), p. 15. Emphasis added.

8. Richard D. Yoakam and Charles F. Cremer, *ENG: Television News and the New Technology,* 2d ed. (New York: Random House, 1985), p. 7.

9. Even journalism students today still talk about "filming" a story, even though they've never had a film camera in their hands.

10. Quoted in Martin Mayer, *Making News* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1993), p. 126.

11. Richard J. Goedkoop, *Inside Local Television News* (Salem, Wisc.: Sheffield Publishing Company, 1988), pp. 149-56.

12. Quoted in ibid., p. 2.

13. Ron Powers, *The Newscasters* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), p. 1.

14. Neil Postman and Steve Powers, *How to Watch TV* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), p. 73.

15. W. Lance Bennett, *News: The Politics of Illusion,* 2d ed. (New York: Longman, 1988), p. xi.

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Eleanor Schano as the "weather lady." (Courtesy, E. Schano)

Broadcasting the Local News is a colorful history of one of the first television stations in America to offer local news programs. That station—KDKA-TV—literally invented television news in Pittsburgh. Unlike many television stations in the United States, KDKA (which first went on the air in 1949 as WDTV) treated news seriously from day one. Its first regular program was a local news show called "Pitt Parade." Today KDKA is still highly regarded among journalists for its news programming.

For this book, Lynn Boyd Hinds, a former Pittsburgh broadcaster, has interviewed the veterans of Pittsburgh broadcasting—Bill Burns, Paul Long, Florence Sando, Eleanor Schano, and others. The story they tell is the story of dozens of other stations across the country. In the process, they tell us much about the early history of television in America.

Lynn Boyd Hinds spent over twenty years in Pittsburgh television and radio before moving to Penn State University, where he was an affiliate producer for WPSX-TV, the public broadcasting station in Central Pennsylvania. There he created and hosted the popular quiz show "The Pennsylvania Game." Today he is Associate Professor of Broadcast News in the Perley Isaac Reed School of Journalism at West Virginia University.

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Front cover: Dave Murray on the set of "The World Tonight." (Courtesy, Dave Murray)

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