

KNBC(TV) expands evening news service to 2½ hours

Local news, increased by many stations in recent years, has taken an even more pronounced turn to longer-form programming at KNBC-TV Los Angeles. Since April 15, the NBC-owned station has been presenting two hours of locally produced news in the late afternoon and early evening hours wrapped around the network's Huntley-Brinkley half-hour. KNBC *News Service*, as it's called, runs for two-and-a-half-hours, five days a week.

The station is not presenting one continuous news program; it's not meant to be watched for 150 consecutive minutes. The news service is geared, instead, to a tune-in and tune-out audience.

Multiple Service ■ There are three program segments of 20-minutes each between 5-6 p.m. Each segment has a separate anchorman: Robert Abernethy, Tom Brokaw and Jess Marlow. The first segment, from 5-5:20, tries to cover all news, though basically the emphasis is local. The second segment, from 5:20-5:40, covers national and international events. The third segment, from 5:40-6, is local. Each segment has sports coverage and only the second segment doesn't include a weather report.

NBC-TV's *The Huntley-Brinkley Report* comes on at 6 p.m. KNBC used to program the show at 7, preceded by an hour of locally produced news. From 6:30-7, the station now

has a half-hour look at local news with full sports and weather reports. From 7-7:30 it runs national and international coverage as well as local stories.

"As the title denotes, we're not a program, we're a news service," explains Robert Mulholland, West Coast news manager for NBC-TV. "We hope to change viewing habits. We're not putting out programming where we say you must tune in at a certain time. We say: 'Watch when you can'."

Mr. Mulholland, who went to the West Coast last July from Washington where he was an associate producer for *The Huntley-Brinkley Report*, says the concept for the *News Service* was the result of conversations with Robert T. Howard, KNBC general manager and NBC vice president, and William Rubens, director of marketing services for NBC-owned television stations division. Research developed by Mr. Rubens indicated that there is an early afternoon market for news in Los Angeles. There also was evidence that people in Los Angeles come home from work over a wide period of time in the afternoon and evening.

NBC-TV newsmen at KNBC (other than weather and sports, news at the NBC-owned stations is provided by the network's news division) spent six weeks of intensive planning before they came up with a feasible way of providing the new

service. Six persons—three writers, a producer, a film editor and assistant film editor—were hired for the expanded coverage. Two producers blend the five program segments into one service. Steve Fentress, once with KMOX-TV St. Louis, is senior producer, and Bill Hill, another alumnus of *Huntley-Brinkley*, is executive producer of all news.

Added Costs ■ The additional hour a day of news is costing about \$7,000 a week. This is the entire cost, those making the estimate point out, and does not necessarily mean \$7,000 more than it used to cost to produce the hour that occupied the 5-6 p.m. slot. Bob Mulholland feels that it will be at least a year before it pays off.

What has been embarrassing is that many people and some newspaper critics are apparently watching the entire service. "We're going to drive them away if they do that," Mr. Mulholland concedes. "It's just not meant to be watched that long."

News Service is going to change a lot of viewing habits, Mr. Mulholland believes. He says the concept is entirely flexible and segments can run longer than 20 minutes if the news of the day warrants such a change. He's also convinced that the technical knowledge gained from producing so many different news programs in a continuous block will be valuable to NBC News and may be the springboard for expanded local news in other markets.

10 football and 23 basketball games. Humble Oil & Refining Co. will sponsor half of all play-by-play. Pepsi-Cola Bottling Co. and Hyatt House Corp. share sponsorship of the remaining half of every Stanford University sports broadcast.

Medical film available ■ "A Changing View of the Change of Life," a film on medical discoveries about menopause, is available on a free-loan basis to commercial and educational TV stations. The 28-minute color film was produced by Wilson Research Foundation through Association Telefilms, New York.

Americana ■ Alan Sands Productions, New York, has acquired distribution rights to *Perspective America*, a radio series of 130 five-minute episodes, narrated by Bob Clarke of the King Family show. Each episode highlights a different aspect of America's heritage.

Holiday specials ■ Producer Bill Coleran, in partnership with Fred Weintraub, is planning to turn out a series of holiday television specials starring the Serendipity Singers. The first program, aimed for Christmas presentation, will be taped at the F.A.O. Schwarz toy store in New York. The second program is scheduled as an Easter special, which will be taped at Palisades Amusement Park in New Jersey. The third program will be a Halloween special.

Four Star futures ■ Four Star International has made an exclusive agreement with John Newland's Palomino Productions to develop feature film and TV shows. Mr. Newland has immediate plans for a new one-hour or two half-hour weekly "period spook story," *Gothic Place*.

Audie Murphy on radio ■ Woroner

Productions, Miami, has signed Audie Murphy, World War II hero, to serve as host of 260, four and one-half minute radio shows, *Beyond the Call*. Each segment will be devoted to a Congressional Medal of Honor winner.

Teen-Age Fair plans ■ Teen-Age Fair Inc., Hollywood-based subsidiary of Filmways Inc., is preparing four TV specials and a half-hour youth oriented series. The projected series, *The Happiness Machine*, is based on an electronic entertainment computer being devised by producer Al Burton and artist Tom Sewell. A pilot for the project is expected to be filmed this month. The four specials, two half-hours and two one-hours, are in various stages of development. One 30-minute program, *Harpers Bizarre—on Location*, is committed to Bristol-Myers and will be filmed in late August around Vancouver, B. C.