TELEVISION QUARTERLY

VOLUME XIV NUMBERS II & III

SUMMER/FALL 1977

THE JOURNAL OF THE
NATIONAL ACADEMY OF
TELEVISION ARTS
AND SCIENCES

LES BROWN—BARRY COLE—DAVID KANIN
MARVIN KITMAN—RICHARD LOUV—ROBERT MACNEIL
MAL OETTINGER—JOEL PERSKY—GABE PRESSMAN
JONATHAN PRICE—HEATHER STRANGE—RICHARD ZOGLIN

PRICE: $2.50

www.americanradiohistory.com

KODAK PROFESSIONAL FORUM

What we know about filmmaking may be just what *you* want to know about filmmaking.

And what we *do* about making film may provide you with the answer to the problem of finding the right film for the kind of visual communication in which you're involved. Kodak is committed to making fine-quality products that offer vividness and preciseness—whether your purpose is to inform, persuade, or entertain.

If you're well on your way to making it in film, or if you're just getting started, you'll find that Kodak products are backed by the technical and engineering support of people who are trained to help you get the most out of them.

These Kodak people would like to give you the help you may need. They are our regional and district sales managers located throughout the country.

And because we realize that the moviemaking business sometimes demands immediate action, we suggest you get on our INFORMATION HOTLINE for instant attention. One of our movie professionals (see telephone numbers below) is ready to answer your questions.

We'd like you to look for *more* help from our KODAK PROFESSIONAL FORUM newsletter. If you want to receive this new source of information written especially for filmmakers, please write: EASTMAN KODAK COMPANY, MP&AVMD, Dept. 640, Rochester, New York 14650.

Eastman Kodak Company offices: 3250 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, California 94109 (415) 776-6055; 1133 Avenue of the Americas, New York, New York 10036 (212) 262-7100; 6300 Cedar Springs Road, Dallas, Texas 75235 (214) 351-3221; 1901 W. 22nd St., Oak Brook, Illinois 60521 (312) 654-5300; 1775 Commerce Drive, N.W. Atlanta, Georgia 30318; (404) 351-6510; 6706 Santa Monica Boulevard, Hollywood, California 90038 (213) 464-6131; 1187 Ridge Road West, Rochester, New York 14650 (716) 254-1300; 500 12th St. S.W. Washington, D.C. 20024 (202) 554-9300.

www.americanradiohistory.com

THE JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF
TELEVISION ARTS AND SCIENCES

EDITORIAL BOARD

EDITOR
HARRIET VAN HORNE

CHAIRMAN
HERMAN LAND
President, Association of Independent Television Stations, Inc.

MEMBERS

Gerald Adler
Royal E. Blakeman
Les Brown
John Cannon
John Carden
James Day
Melvin A. Goldberg
Richard Hanser
Frederick A. Jacobi
David Karp
Robert D. Kasmire
Robert Lewine
Ellis Moore
Agnes Eckhardt Nixon
Richard R. Rector
Dr. Alex Toogood

www.americanradiohistory.com

TELEVISION QUARTERLY

is published quarterly by The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, 110 West 57th. Street, New York, New York, 10019 (212) 765-2450

Members of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences receive TELEVISION QUARTERLY as part of membership services. Inquiry regarding membership should be directed to the office of The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

BUSINESS ADVERTISING OFFICES: Television Quarterly, 110 West 57th. Street, New York, New York 10019 (212) 765-2450. Advertising placement and other business arrangements should be made with the New York office of The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

EDITORIAL OFFICE: Television Quarterly, NATAS, 110 West 57th. Street, New York, New York 10019 (212) 765-2450

The subscription rates for non-members, libraries and others is $8.00 a year and $2.50 a copy in the United States, $10.00 a year and $3.00 a copy in all other countries. Special Student Subscription $6.00. Subscription orders should be sent to TELEVISION QUARTERLY, The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, 110 West 57th. Street, New York, New York 10019 Att: Trudy Wilson

---

The opinions expressed herein are solely those of the contributing authors and do not necessarily represent those of The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences or the members of the Editorial Board of Television Quarterly.

Design and Printing:
Chapman's Phototypesetting
1135 E. Truslow
Fullerton, California 92631

Copyright © 1977, by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

---

www.americanradiohistory.com

TELEVISION QUARTERLY

VOL. XIV NO. II & III

CONTENTS

www.americanradiohistory.com

For outstanding engineering achievement in television, General Electric has won an Emmy.

The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences has honored General Electric for 'The First Application of the Vertical Interval Reference (VIR) Signal System to Television Receivers.'

There's a signal in the air that lets broadcasters control TV color. The signal is VIR. Inside a GE VIR set is advanced computer-like circuitry that uses the broadcaster's VIR signal to automatically adjust all of the color on many programs. Flesh tones. Background colors. The entire color picture. All automatically.

You owe it to yourself to look at this GE VIR color TV set in action before you buy a new set. See a demonstration today.

THIS IS GE PERFORMANCE TELEVISION

GENERAL ELECTRIC

www.americanradiohistory.com

Those Cards and Letters Keep a-Comin'—to the FCC

By BARRY COLE and MAL OETTINGER

Dear FCC–Please make Walter Cronkite stop saying "That's the way it is" at the end of his news programs. He don't know how it is. He only thinks he does!
—Letter in FCC Complaints and Compliance Files

The people who write letters are different from you and me. Long ago, professional pollsters learned that letter campaigns do not necessarily verify random sampling of opinion. Networks have cancelled programs despite a blizzard of enthusiastic letters because the program chiefs believed the "right" kind of consumers were not watching. The FCC has learned to process letters, after a fashion, but the agency has never attempted to analyze what the people who write letters are trying to say. Of course the commissioners cannot set policy solely on the basis of correspondence from the broadcast audience; but if they read their mail more closely, they might learn when something is seriously wrong.

In fiscal 1976, the FCC received 75,000 complaints about broadcasting matters, excluding letters to individual agency members and complaints transmitted through congressmen. One cause célèbre so skewed the customary figures that the public responses to that matter were tabulated separately; a petition by two Californians asking the FCC to withhold grants of educational TV or FM stations to religious broadcasters precipitated an evangelical letter-writing campaign that brought 5.5 million letters and postcards to the FCC by May 1977. The FCC denied the original petition in August 1975; but that denial did little to staunch the flood of letters from complainants convinced that a plot (led by Madalyn Murray O'Hare) was under way to banish all forms of religious broadcasting.

In theory, the public is supposed to be an important partner in the FCC's watchdog function. Chairman Burch said as much in a colloquy with the skeptical Senator John O. Pastore (D.–R.I.) during 1973 oversight hearings:

Pastore: What kinds of monitoring do you do? Do you monitor at all?

www.americanradiohistory.com

Burch: We do not monitor program content, Senator, not unless we have reason to. If we have had a specific complaint. . . .

Pastore: Well, that brings me to the point. The only time you have a reason is when someone makes a complaint, isn't it?

Burch: Yes.

Pastore: You have to rely pretty much on the public, don't you?

Burch: That is right.

Pastore: You have no other way of investigating? I mean, you don't monitor anything?

Burch: We could presumably monitor, Senator, but I think, frankly, I would rather rely on the public to complain than to have the FCC indulging in great monitoring effort.

Pastore: My experience has been when people are dissatisfied and write a letter to the station, they get sort of a courteous reply that really doesn't tell them much. And nothing ever changes. . . . And then they write to me, and I send it down to you. If it is a complaint from my state, you are about 450 miles away from where the complaint is. Usually I get a very polite answer from the FCC, too, and nothing happens. The only time these things really surface, to any extent, is at renewal time.

Although many of the public's complaints or comments are worthwhile, not all deserve government attention. At times, the tone of the letters that pour into the FCC may sound like fan mail to Don Rickles or petitions to the Wizard of Oz for miracle cures for society's ills. In an earlier appropriations hearing, Burch told Sen. Pastore: "Many of those [letters], to be very candid, Senator, are the kinds of things you would not know how to handle, even if you had all the money in the world. You would not know what to do with them because there are people who write and say they just don't like commercials." "There is an easy answer to that," Pastore said, "just write back and say, 'Neither do we.' "

The Commission has never found a middle ground on which frivolous public objections would be turned aside politely and serious derelictions of broadcasters' public trusteeship would be investigated and corrected. On the inadequacy of the complaint procedures, Commissioner Quello has frequently commented that "we may simply demonstrate to concerned citizens that the complaint process is unproductive" and thus leave them "the costly and time-consuming petition to deny [license renewal] as an alternative."

www.americanradiohistory.com

The FCC established the Complaints and Compliance Division of the Broadcast Bureau in 1960, after Congress had held publicized hearings about fraudulent television quiz shows and payola to radio disc jockeys and program directors. Congress insisted that the FCC ensure such atrocities would cease. Frederick Ford, FCC chairman when the division was established, foresaw a unit with as many as 25 field investigators who would not only look into specific public complaints but also determine if alleged practices were industrywide.

In an FCC notice of May 20, 1960, Ford said:

> Now we propose to undertake an audit in detail of a limited number of selected stations so that we can have a much more penetrating and more rounded view of how effectively stations discharge their stewardship in the public interest. We intend, among other items, to check on program logs, Sec. 317 wsponsorship identificatione compliance, political broadcast records, . . . and other pertinent station controls, records, and procedures related to the Commission's nontechnical rules and regulations. . . ; to examine the extent, nature and disposition of complaints coming directly to the stations; to ascertain whether representations made in connection with license applications are reasonably complied with. . . .

Ford outlined a program of regular station audits, checking on programming as well as technical violations. He noted that some 5000 broadcast stations were operating in 2000 communities throughout the nation. "We would do well with the proposed staff if we could reach as many as 100 communities for full audit." He said the FCC would "develop means of effectively screening various types of situations" and "focus our resources where they will do the most good." In 1977, the FCC administered almost 9300 broadcast stations—but the surveillance Ford envisioned has not come to be.

Periodically a charade is played out in Commission meetings: a commissioner charges the division with failing to handle a complaint and a staffer responds that the division is understaffed and overworked—and there the matter lies. By May 1977, the division had only 48 employees, of whom 17 were investigators. The volume of correspondence has increased ninefold from 1962 to 1976. No commissioner has crusaded for the funding necessary for adequate division staffing nor has the FCC analyzed how to handle the most critical problems within the division's purview.

Most complaints, of necessity, are answered with form letters; some complaints alleging serious breaches of FCC rules or callous disregard of the public are forwarded to the stations involved for explanations. In any

www.americanradiohistory.com

case, the division is often months behind in its responses. The Commission has had as many as 5000 form letters waiting to be addressed, but there is insufficient secretarial help to process them.

Significantly, the Federal Office of Consumer Affairs, in a 1975 study of 15 agencies, listed the FCC as one of four agencies that replied too slowly to public complaints. The same study rated the FCC satisfactory in speed and manner of responding to congressional queries. While correspondence from the public may languish for weeks, even months, the FCC has an expedited system to ensure prompt action on congressional mail.

The nature of the complaints sent to the FCC varies from year to year —often in response to organized efforts. For example, complaints about crime, violence, and horror in television programming rose to 8897 in fiscal 1975, from 895 the previous year. Of the 24,344 complaints about obscene and indecent programs the FCC received in 1974, more than 20,000 were identical printed letters, distributed to its members by Morality in Media, headquartered in Warrenton, Virginia.

Of the 74,761 complaints in fiscal 1976, 62,724 concerned television. Two national letter-writing campaigns increased the number of Fairness Doctrine complaints to 41,861 (from 3590 the previous year): *The Guns of Autumn*, a documentary critical of hunters and gun owners, was opposed by the National Rifle Association and other sports groups (and CBS voluntarily ran a program replying to the documentary); the other campaign consisted of letters calling for invoking of the Fairness Doctrine to enable spokesmen for decency and morality to counteract programming on television. Complaints about violence and horror on television were down to 3448 in fiscal 1976, from 8897 the previous year.

A wide range of human pathology is exhibited in letters to the FCC. Each year women complain that Johnny Carson is watching them undress at night, and men complain that a certain program is being broadcast solely to render them impotent. Some people inveigh against Communist propaganda on regularly scheduled news programs, and others suspect that TV characters are "saying things about me."

Other letters are thoughtful and well composed, but they seek remedies beyond the FCC's powers. For example, a New York viewer complained about sportscaster Dick Schaap's referring to racehorses Secretariat and Riva Ridge as "the most famous pair of stablemates since Joseph and Mary." Many listeners complain about disc jockeys making flip references to drugs or nudity. The FCC is empowered to levy penalties against licensees who broadcast obscenity, and the agency has occasionally fined stations on this ground, but many viewer complaints treat matters of taste, which would not come under any legal definition of obscenity.

Almost every ethnic, racial, and religious group has found occasion to complain about something programmed on television. Indian groups

www.americanradiohistory.com

have complained about the showing of westerns; Japanese-Americans and German-Americans have deplored the reruns of war movies of the 1940s; and some Chinese-Americans resent Charlie Chan films. After complaints to the FCC had been unavailing, Spanish-American civil right groups persuaded Pepsico to banish the "Frito Bandito" from commercials. A group of Polish-Americans took their complaint about Polish jokes all the way to the Supreme Court, which refused to hear the case. The National Black Feminist Organization protested that the program *That's My Mama* perpetuated racist and sexist stereotypes.

Complaints come from proponents of various philosophies. Feminists demand that the FCC provide equal time for them to correct alleged offenses: announcers' referring to "God" without mentioning "Goddess," and a news show's billboarding an item about women going on active sea duty as "Ankles Aweigh." Vegetarians resent advertisements claiming meat is necessary for good nutrition. Atheists ask for time to counter religious programs. Such groups invariably seek air time for a certain point of view and seek to bar opposing views. Some of the grievances might well impress an impartial jury; others reflect mindless fanaticism.

About 72 percent of the FCC replies are form letters. Often the reply includes a short mimeographed pamphlet about legal restrictions on the FCC on such matters as "Broadcasts That Demean Certain Groups," or "Obscenity, Indecency, and Profanity in Broadcasting." A covering form letter explains the Commission is sending preprinted material because "we believe the taxpayer will appreciate the economy" involved. Stephen Sewell, chief of the complaints branch, says the pamphlets were prepared as "part of a continuing effort to be more clear and more responsive," but he acknowledges that most complainants will not be satisfied.

At regional meetings commissioners were told that letter writers who had put time and effort into composing complaints believed they deserved thoughtful responses, not form letters. "We've got to live with the fact that we can't do much with most of the letters. The public is mainly interested in programming—understandably so—and our authority in the programming area is limited."

If the complaint seeks station time for a reply, the Complaints and Compliance Division sends instructions about how to file an official Fairness Doctrine complaint:

> The Commission expects a complainant to submit specific information indicating: (1) the station or network involved; (2) the specific issue or issues of a controversial nature of public importance presented by the station; (3) the date and time when the issue or issues were broadcast; (4) the basis for the claim that the issue or issues were controversial issues of public importance, either nationally or in the station's locality at

www.americanradiohistory.com

> the time of the broadcast; (5) the basis for the claim that the station or network broadcast only one side of the issue or issues in its overall programming (complainant should include accurate summary of the view or views broadcast or presented by the station); and (6) whether the station or network has afforded, or has expressed an intention to afford, reasonable opportunity for the presentation of contrasting viewpoints on that issue or issues.

To get a clear picture of the odds against the complainant, consider the statistics. In fiscal 1973 and 1974 the FCC received 4300 complaints dealing with fairness; complainants included politicians who claimed they weren't given equal time under Section 315, persons who claimed they'd been given no chance to reply to personal attacks, and persons who were turned down when they asked to reply to a broadcast editorial. More than 97 percent of these 4300 complaints were rejected by the FCC because of "improper filing or misunderstanding of the Doctrine." Of 138 complaints forwarded to the stations for an explanation, only 19 (0.4 percent of the total 4300) were eventually resolved against the station—14 of these involved violations of the personal attack rule or political editorializing, and five were general fairness violations.

One reason so few complaints are investigated is lack of staff and travel funds. In an internal budget review memorandum, the Complaints and Compliance Division stated that it was "presently able to conduct field inquiries into *less than 5 percent* of the complaints requiring some kind of investigation." The division estimated also that approximately 20 percent of the complaints that did require some kind of investigation would involve field inquiries (visits to the stations).

Usually after complaining to the Commission about a station's conduct, the complainant is not fully apprised of such developments as correspondence between the Commission and the station. Often the complainant is not even told whether the complaint will lead to the FCC's querying the station. Sometimes the complainant receives the following form letter:

> Thank you for your recent letter about the above station.
> Your complaint is being brought to the station's attention, and upon recept of a response the Commission will take whatever action is deemed appropriate.

In answer to a 1975 questionnaire from the House Investigations Subcommittee, the Commission put forth a somewhat idealized picture of the complaints process:

www.americanradiohistory.com

> The Commission itself is given a monthly report on all complaints, comments, and inquiries received, separated into subject categories, for its own information on the current reaction of the public to various broadcast practices. Complaints which prove to be valid are, of course, widely used in the regulatory process–not only as the basis for imposition of sanctions on licensees or denial of license renewal, but in determining which of two competing applicants at renewal time should be granted preference, whether a transfer application should be granted, and whether an application for a major change in facilities should be granted. Commission personnel other than members of the Complaints and Compliance Division staff consult the C & C complaint folders and investigatory records regularly before determining what recommendation should be made to the Commission in other proceedings.

This procedure is similar to that proposed by Chairman Ford in 1960; it incorporates a close coordination between complaints against a station and consideration of license renewal. In practice, it works differently.

A monthly report *is* sent by Complaints and Compliance to all commissioners, and is accompanied by sample complaints that might raise policy questions for commissioners' consideration. The problem is that the members consider the C&C reports and the attached letters as mere "information items," which need not be discussed or acted upon or, from every indication, even read. Only once during seven years did a commissioner ask if C&C was investigating the complaint; invariably the commissioners offer no guidance and recommend no reprimands.

Even when the Commission decides that a complaint against a station is entirely valid—which is rare—nothing seems to happen if the complainant has no financial interest in the outcome. One such case was decided while Cole was at the FCC. Although not altogether typical because of various nuances and complexities, the case exemplifies how the Commission deals with such matters.

The case began in September 1971, when a caller to Detroit radio station WWJ *Speak-Out* launched what the Commission later judged to be a personal attack on Professor Leonard Moss of Wayne State University. The FCC noted: "The remarks in question accuse Professors Moss and Convensky of promoting the Russian form of government, described as one under which millions were butchered, and of trying to destroy the American form of government. Such statements reflect on the integrity and character of the named professors and fall within the purview of the Commission's personal attack rules."

The station never informed Moss of these remarks; but when he learned about them and complained, he was offered time to respond,

www.americanradiohistory.com

which he refused. WWJ failed to give Moss a transcript of the remarks for 22 days. He complained to the FCC.

FCC's rules about stations' offering individuals an opportunity to respond to personal attacks are unusually plain. The Complaints & Compliance Division pointed out to the Commission that the station failed (a) to notify Moss of the personal attack within seven days of broadcasts, (b) to provide a transcript or summary of the attack within the allotted time, and (c) to offer him a *timely* opportunity to reply.

By a unanimous vote (although three commissioners were absent), the FCC voted to fine WWJ $1000 and ordered a letter notifying the station of its apparent liability sent February 9, 1972. In the letter, the Commission rejected the station's responses to the complaint: whether Moss availed himself of the right to respond when he was furnished a transcript of the attack, or whether he would have had he been notified within seven days "is immaterial to a determination that you violated the terms of the Rules." The station's assertion that another professor had expressed contrasting views to those of the anonymous caller did not relieve the station of its obligation to observe the provisions of the rule in respect to Professor Moss, the person who had been attacked.

Not until June 26, 1974, after receiving further station defenses did the Commission consider whether the $1000 fine should finally be imposed. By that time, a different set of commissioners was considering the matter: Burch and Johnson, both of whom had voted to send WWJ the notice of apparent liability, had left the FCC; Quello, Robinson, and Hooks had joined the Commission. Wiley (who was absent for the 1972 vote) abstained because he had been general counsel when the case was originally prepared. Reid and Robert E. Lee, who approved the original notification, were still commissioners.

When the matter of the fine arose, Quello vigorously defended the station and opposed the fine. Several staff members, including commissioners' legal aides, privately expressed astonishment at Quello's participation in the decision: he had been a Detroit broadcaster when the program was aired; and as he said, "I know these people [WWJ's management] well," and know that they were "very upset about the whole thing—to fine them is just putting a larger black mark on them." Quello's defense raised the same points that the FCC had previously rejected when WWJ made them. When Quello added that management had been unaware of the incident when it happened, Wiley responded that if the Commission could not hold management responsible for the actions of its staff, the Commission could not regulate.

Commissioner Reid, accustomed to "congressional courtesy"—if something is really important to one's colleague, one goes along—suggested reducing the fine from $1000 to $500; but William Ray, chief of the C&C Division, said that reducing the fine for a major station in a large market would make the FCC "look ridiculous." Ray urged the com-

www.americanradiohistory.com

missioners to either stick with the $1000 fine or rescind it completely; it was clear that he did not favor the latter course. Nonetheless, the Commission voted without dissent to rescind the fine and instead to send WWJ a letter of admonition. The letter said that although the Commission still believed the station had violated the personal attack rule, the violation "was not so flagrant as to warrant the imposition of a forfeiture."

Staff members who had worked on the case were outraged. One senior member told Cole that the decision "gutted" the personal attack rule. A lawyer said that if the station had been a small one, "the fine would have been imposed like that. . . . There's no equal justice at the FCC. They just are afraid of punishing the big guy." In a meeting a few months later, Ray wryly told the commissioners that the personal attack rule "is difficult to enforce and maybe we'd all be better off forgetting about the whole thing."

On some occasions the FCC decides to take no action on complaints that raise broad questions of policy. In April 1974, an Albany, Oregon, undertaker complained to the FCC that the licensee of the local radio station was broadcasting without charge the Sunday services of the licensee's church, but was requiring other churches to pay for air time. Ten months later, the Broadcast Bureau suggested to the Commission that the licensee was failing to give a "fair break" to other religious groups in the community, and that "By providing free time consistently each week to only one church, KRKT practiced a type of religious discrimination contrary to Commission policy." According to the bureau the station's practice, which had already lasted over a year and a half, "raises a novel question of Commission policy."

The General Counsel, however, recommended that the FCC not admonish the licensee or conduct a further investigation because the case was de minimus—peanuts—from the legal point of view; the FCC should wait for a more "egregious" cause before "moving in this sensitive area." Wiley, who seemed generally to support the Broadcast Bureau position, asked, "Supposing a Protestant, as station policy, gave free time only to Protestants, and the rest had to pay?" A staffer replied, "I'm a Catholic and I'd take up a collection and buy time." A commissioner said, "I'm a Catholic and I'd complain to beat hell." Another staffer quipped, "I'm a Jew and I'd buy the station."

In other complaint areas of major importance to the broadcast audience, the commissioners seemed unable to take action—and showed neither ingenuity nor perseverance in coping with the problems. An outstanding example is the FCC's long failure to respond to thousands of complaints about loud commercials.

This is *not* a delicate First Amendment area—the issue is not the content of the commercials, merely whether they are purposely made louder than surrounding program material. A typical letter of complaint to the FCC concludes: "Commercial TV is a part of our lives, and we should

www.americanradiohistory.com

pay a price for it, but couldn't you regulate the noise pollution we are asked to accept in our homes?"

In 1965, after a two-year study, the Commission issued a public notice regarding loud commercials. The six-page notice detailed the practices that result in loud commercials and told licensees that, to the extent that it was within their control, they had an "affirmative obligation" to prevent broadcast of objectionably loud commercials. The Commission told licensees to adopt adequate control-room procedures and take "appropriate steps to provide for precreening recorded commercials for loudness." The public notice announced that "The Commission, through its complaint procedure or by spot checks at renewal time, will determine whether licensees are carrying out their obligation in this respect, and will take whatever action is appropriate on the basis of such review.

By June 1975, almost exactly 10 years after the release of that public notice, the Commission still had not spot-checked licensees at renewal time nor used its "complaint procedure" to enforce its policy on loud commercials.

In a 1975 FCC agenda meeting, Commissioner Washburn asked if the Commission had any rule regarding loud commercials. William Ray replied that no such rule existed because the Commission had concluded there was no objective standard by which to judge how loud is too loud.

Commissioner Robert Lee joked, "We once said, if you wake up during a program, it's too loud," and noted that, "Years ago, there was going to be a machine to measure loud commercials." Lee asked Broadcast Bureau Chief Wallace Johnson, "What happened?" Johnson responded, "It didn't work." Chairman Wiley then noted that Senator Howard Baker (R.–Tenn.), ranking minority member of the Senate Communications subcommittee, had been complaining about loud commercials. Wiley suggested, "Why not send out another reminder? We'll just change the date."

The new reminder on loud commercials appeared on the agenda of July 22, 1975. In a cover memorandum to that agenda item, a legal assistant to one of the commissioners wrote the following:

> This item is a public notice advising licensees of their continuing obligation concerning loud commercials. The basic Commission policy was stated in a public notice dated July 12, 1965, which is attached.
>
> Considering that recurring violations and complaints continue to occur after 10 years' notice, this seems like a fairly weak method of dealing with the problem. Is there any precedent for fines, sanctions, or admonitions to violating stations?

The new public notice, which contained only two paragraphs, was

www.americanradiohistory.com

adopted with little discussion: the notice simply said that "Complaints in this area still persist," and reminded "all licensees that they have an affirmative obligation to see that objectionably loud commercials are not broadcast." The public notice was sent along with a copy of the 1965 statement.

In an editorial on September 27, 1975, *TV Guide* commented on the Commission's latest notice regarding loud commercials and noted that the *Guide* had editorialized against loud commercials on June 11, 1955, ten years before the Commission had issued its first policy statement:

> Well, the scene changes again. *Another* 10 years go by. Now it is 1975. And history prepares to repeat itself. The FCC, noting that it still receives complaints from the public about loud commercials, has just reissued its 1965 directive. But since the directive lacks a penalty provision, there is no reason to assume that it will be any more successful this time than it was last. . . .

TV Guide's assumption was solid. No penalties have been imposed for loud commercials, despite the fact that the appeals court (CCC decision of 1971) suggested that the broadcasting of loud commercials should be considered in FCC evaluation of renewal applications. The Commission has not investigated other ways to control loud commercials. The simple statement that the loudness machine, tried years before, hadn't worked was enough to convince the Commission not to try again.

No one has to listen to commercials—and too many commissioners believe they do not have to listen to complaints from the audience.

Excerpted from Reluctant Regulators: The FCC and the Broadcast Audience by Barry Cole and Mal Oettinger, copyright © 1978, $10.95. Reprinted by permission of Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Inc., Reading, Mass. All rights reserved.

Barry Cole has been a Special Consultant to the FCC for the past five years. He has also taught communications and served as consultant to the House Sub-Committee on Communications.

Mal Oettinger is a journalist specializing in the broadcast field. He was formerly on the staff of NBC News Information in Washington.

www.americanradiohistory.com

Disability Income Protection... (just in case.)

Because, sometimes we need a little more security than Lady Luck provides. And, Disability Income Protection from Mutual of Omaha is just the answer.

It's essential coverage that can make up for lost income by providing regular monthly benefits should a covered sickness or accident keep you from working. Benefits that can be used for hospital or doctor bills, food, clothing or whatever you wish. It's entirely up to you.

That's why the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences recommends this protection for their members. It's important insurance coverage that comes in handy . . . just in case your luck runs out.

For full information, contact your nearest Mutual of Omaha representative or write: Mutual of Omaha, Association Group Department, Dodge at 33rd, Omaha, Nebr. 68131

UNDERWRITTEN BY

Mutual of Omaha®

People you can count on...

MUTUAL OF OMAHA INSURANCE COMPANY ● HOME OFFICE: OMAHA, NEBRASKA

www.americanradiohistory.com

The Trouble with Mary

By RICHARD ZOGLIN

Robert Redford, Barbara Walters, Gloria Steinem and Shirley Chisholm—not to mention every television critic in the land—have all noted, in sorrow, the passing of the *Mary Tyler Moore Show*. When the curtain fell, we all felt a sense of loss. To know Mary was to love her. But in the genial glow surrounding her departure did anybody pause to ask, "Was the show really all that wonderful?"

Of course, Mary made us laugh. And so did Lou Grant and Ted Baxter and Sue-Ann and the rest of the fine resident company. But the MTM show, in retrospect, was a ramshackle affair. Situation and character always lost out to the jokes. And sometimes the jokes were so mechanized, so well greased, and so condescending, that we hated ourselves for laughing.

Pavlov's dogs, drooling when the bell chimed, were demonstrating conditioned response. But what are we doing, laughing on cue at the same slick trickery, over and over?

The basic flaw in the MTM show crystallized for me during the next to last episode. (The *very* last show, in which everybody—except Ted—was fired from the news staff was such a phoney, arbitrary wrap-up that one would prefer to put it out of mind forever. Let there be no rerun of that one!)

In this penultimate segment, Mary invites her boss, gruff Mr. Grant, to have dinner at her apartment. Both have a bad case of first-date nerves. Out of curiosity, or a respect for courting ritual, they position themselves on the sofa and try to simulate romance. It's a sticky moment.

Are these two old enemies about to fall in love? Well, of course not, as they both knew all along. Their kiss ends in wild laughter. They have found each other unappetizing. We are embarrassed. They shouldn't have tried so hard to ignite a spark, especially with all of us looking on.

That scene was, to this viewer, typical MTM hokum. A real-life situation is set up. Pretty girl invites boss to dinner. Both sense that the tensions of the office must be dispelled. A "resolution" is found—and it simply reminds us that this show is neither consistent nor completely human. It's a device for telling jokes.

Because we like Mary Tyler Moore, and admire her verve and style, we would have enjoyed seeing her in an adult comedy. Instead, we were treated to farcical gag-writing at its most blatant. The old, old Mary Tyler

www.americanradiohistory.com

Moore show, co-starring Dick Van Dyke, was far more appealing. It kept a human dimension.

Looking back, there have never been any genuine characters—aside from Mary and Lou—on the MTM series. Instead we've met "personalities" who spouted gag lines.

Vain, pompous Ted, man-hungry Sue-Ann, wisecracking Murray, all were picture cutouts. People who ceased to exist once the scene ended. Talking puppets, put together in some animation workshop, solely to deliver laugh lines.

If Mary and Lou appeared to be the only "real" characters at that Minneapolis TV station, it's because they delivered the straight lines most of the time.

The schizophrenia that disfigured the show in recent years steadily worsened as the character of Ted Baxter grew larger—and louder. As caricature, stupid, self-important Ted made his mark. He overplayed—but we forgave him.

Then Ted got married. Obviously, we were now expected to regard this cartoon figure as a real, rounded human being.

The thought of Baxter, the buffoon, the ego-maniac, loving, sharing and worrying over household problems verged on the grotesque. One might also apply the word "grotesque" to Ted's spaced-out bride, Georgette. Ineptly played, she struggled through Saturday night without delivering a single credible line.

Here's a typical episode, with its rather sickening resolution.

Ted and Georgette were concerned that their adopted son's high IQ was making him a smug little prig. After some traditional sitcom dialog, the hollow debate that must precede action, Ted decides to give the boy his first spanking. He does so—and weeps piteously. It's the boy who rises to manhood and comforts Ted.

Funny? Not really. And not for an instant believable, as the original MTM series used to be.

A character in Trevor Griffith's play, *Comedians,* delivers a line that sums up the MTM problem. "We work *through* laughter, not *for* it," he says.

The MTM show, with its gag-a-minute compulsion, never understood the distinction. The jokes were often witty, sometimes marvelously so. But they were seldom more than disconnected witticisms. The roar of the laugh track made them seem wildly funny, even when they were flat and silly. That's why laugh tracks will never go out of style.

I remember—wincing a little—another show in which the news staff discussed the possibility of airing a show about body-building. Ted, striking a *macho* pose, argues against the idea.

"There's a name for those guys who spend all their time posing and blowing kisses at themselves in the mirror," he snorts.

"Yeah, Ted Baxter," drawls Murray.

www.americanradiohistory.com

So far, it's funny. And natural. We are laughing, we believe.

Then Ted turns to Georgette. "Either he's a lucky guesser or you're a blabber-mouth." And it's not funny. We're back in the presence of the joke machine. It's an automatic weapon that misfires when used too often.

Granted, these lines were not written to stand up under logical analysis. They're laugh-getters, that's all. But it is precisely this anything-for-a-laugh theory that has destroyed the show's larger claims on our imagination.

If comedy is to be anything more than a string of fast gags, it must adhere to some kind of internal logic. Murray's line seems natural because it strikes us as the sort of thing he would say. Ted's line makes no sense at all.

In this vital matter of adhering to an inner logic, the situation comedies of the '50's and '60's were decidedly superior. When you watch these shows in reruns today, you are pleasantly surprised. The humor—as in the old *I Love Lucy* series, for example—rises from the situations and the characters. These shows never jeopardized the comic universe they'd created for the sake of an isolated laugh.

The "sitcoms" of yesteryear may have been less daring in subject matter, more conventional in their moral tone, but they were mature in terms of technique and dialog.

Though *All in the Family* is often credited with changing the look and the tone of domestic comedy, the gag-obsessed, vaudeville style that dehumanizes so much of TV comedy today seems to derive more from Mary Tyler Moore than from Archie Bunker.

Run through a few weeks of the situation comedies now on the tube and you will meet a glittering company of cookie cutter people. You will also find the same plot devices, the same set-ups for the same jokes, the same denouements. The speech patterns, the mannerisms, the social values are all from the same assembly line.

Close your eyes and listen to the crackle of the dialog. Bob Newhart, Phyllis, Rhoda, Maude, Edith Bunker, LaVerne and Shirley, are they not speaking to us from the same broken record? And isn't it curious how they all talk like old gag writers from the Jack Benny show?

And that brings us back to the dark lady of this irregular sonnet, Mary Tyler Moore. That she surmounted seven years of mechanical jokes and mechanical laughs just proves what a nice, wholesome, *credible* girl she is.

Richard Zoglin is a free-lance writer whose work has appeared in The New Republic, *and the Sunday New York Times.*

www.americanradiohistory.com

ABC Television Network

www.americanradiohistory.com

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"I think that the English language, the general use of it, has been improved by broadcasting. Television has not broken trail much culturally. It can't because it's a mass medium, trying to keep as big an audience as possible. It can't be a trail blazer. It can catch up with us, whether it's sex on television, or whatever. It all starts somewhere else. The debasement of speech among groups that ought to speak better—that's because of the schools. We don't have news broadcasters talking slum talk. Before you had radio you had millions of people living in remote places—what kind of English diction did they ever hear? If anything, broadcasting has raised standards.

"I don't believe these learned articles that say that television-watching is making for a homogenized mentality, malted-milk minds, mass conformity. This is bunk. What is the evidence? It's an assertion by a type of intellectual who really doesn't know about people. People are quite skeptical, very individual. You can't con people very long. No politician has been able to do it for very long. Even children become skeptical about commercials at an early age.

"There's an awful lot of information; that's part of the problem. It's almost news pollution. People can't cope with the sheer volume. Sometimes it's very hard to get certain news, but getting it now is easier than almost any time.

"It's making sense of it that's the problem. In spite of the information, in spite of all we try to do, this is not a one-way street. There's a tremendous amount of biased listening and reading, or inaccurate listening and reading, on the part of the so-called public. It's just there.

"Even today, after all that's been published and broadcast, nearly half the people in the country think we have all the oil in this country we'll ever need. How do you figure it? For years, the majority of people believed Joe McCarthy was on to something important, in spite of all that we reported. An event has to happen to turn people around from an easy assumption.

"The reason serious documentaries don't get big audiences is not because we aren't bold about them—my god, we've done about everything in the nature of controversy, and it's not that we don't do them well—we're doing them better than we ever did. It's that people are weary of the same public issues—the Mideast, energy, the cities, welfare. Because they see no solutions. We cannot give people the answers. The answers are too complicated. If every great social or international question really had a so-called root cause—sociologists like to think that you can find it, that you can say this is the answer. You don't."

—*Eric Sevareid,*
Interviewed in Broadcasting Magazine

www.americanradiohistory.com

www.americanradiohistory.com

Can Video Cure?

BY JONATHAN PRICE

Among the groups that can afford to buy video gear in large volume are the therapists—psychologists, psychiatrists, radical shrinks, social workers, conservative Freudians—most with enough money to buy their own equipment or enough power within an institution to get the hospital or clinic to buy it. Many had spotted video gear in university teacher-training programs; others had used it on consultancies in industry. But the therapists were able to develop a side of video that had frightened conventional thinkers in those areas: Video can show you yourself.

You can look at yourself easily with video, not because your boss wants you to sew buttons faster, not because the education school thinks you need to increase the number of information questions you ask, just to look—maybe to learn something you've been hiding from yourself.

Not everyone wants to look. Joan Goldsmith runs a seminar at the Antioch Institute for Open Education, encouraging the participants to explore their own pasts and their own images. One man, Harry, sat blank-faced and motionless throughout the first videotaping of the group. Ms. Goldsmith recalls, "Harry seems to have killed all physical expression of himself. You almost feel he is not there. As we began the playback of the videotape of the group to itself, Harry became more slumped in his chair. He covered a good part of his face with his hand. He said nothing after seeing himself. However, the next day when he came to my office to explain why he would be dropping the course he told me his reaction to seeing the tape. 'As the camera moved around the group and came toward me, I was sure I would find nothing on the screen. . . . I felt there would be no one there—just an empty chair . . . I didn't think I would see my face. Only a blank screen. I don't want to see myself. I don't want to know I'm here . . . I didn't like seeing myself."

The shock comes from facing your own face. Joan Goldsmith says that many people who are starting out as teachers still see themselves as students, worse still, as kids. The video picture proves to them that they look grown-up. One person reacted, "I think of myself as a kid, maybe 16 or 17, I guess I dress that way too. But when I was first videotaped in front of the class I realized I was on the other side of the desk from the other kids. . . . I didn't feel like a woman but there I was—teacher." Joan Goldsmith com-

www.americanradiohistory.com

ments, "The objectivity of TV feedback and the power of seeing oneself from a distance allows one to deal with the issues of growing up, aging and death."

Comparing your real video image with the picture you have of yourself in your mind can raise deep conflicts to the surface of your consciousness. One person told Ms. Goldsmith, "I looked so straight. I couldn't believe it. I've realized I've worn suits and ties for years—almost compulsively. . . . I never felt I was straight, but when I saw myself I realized I've always looked that way . . . very clean, short hair, suit and tie. . . . I've been thinking about what's masculine and feminine since I was a kid. . . . I felt I was built like a woman, and I was afraid to look like one, so suits and ties all the time. . . ."

Also, you may find out that your feelings do not show to a stranger. One assistant superintendent in a cityschool system watched a touching tape about a runaway girl; he was in turn taped while watching. His reaction to himself: "I didn't know I showed so little of what I felt. . . . I was moved by the girl, but nothing came out. I showed nothing on my face. I wonder if that is all my kids see. I looked stern. I felt very sad."

Joan Goldsmith's work shows how teacher-training can shade into psychotherapy via video. People here are learning about themselves. They can see themselves as others might. They can contrast what's visible with what they were actually feeling—and the contrast often jolts. Who would have thought this before video? The tool became available, then the technique developed, and afterward came an idea to explain it.

The attitude of people using video in therapy is distinctly different from that of people using video for training. Carl Rogers, a major American psychotherapist, once went before a seminar at the Harvard School of Education and shocked the academicians by claiming that he no longer wanted to teach, drawing a sharp distinction between teaching and therapy, which he called mutual learning.

He said, "My experience has been that I cannot teach another person how to teach. It seems to me that anything that can be taught to another is relatively inconsequential, and has little or no significant influence on behavior. I realize increasingly that I am only interested in learnings which significantly influence behavior. I have come to feel that the only learning which significantly influences behavior is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning. As a consequence of the above, I realize that I have lost interest in being a teacher. Hence I have come to feel that the outcomes of teaching are either unimportant or hurtful. I realize that I am only interested in being a learner, preferably learning things that matter, that have some significant influence on my own behavior."

Then Rogers tried to define significant learning in psychotherapy. "The person comes to see himself differently. He accepts himself and his feelings more fully. He becomes more self-confident and self-directing. He be-

www.americanradiohistory.com

comes more the person he would like to be. He becomes more flexible, less rigid, in his perceptions. He adopts more realistic goals for himself. He behaves in a more mature fashion. He changes his maladjustive behaviors, even such a long-established one as chronic alcoholism. He becomes more accepting." Here, then, are some of the aims to which video was adapted by many psychiatrists during the sixties under the general term "confrontational psychotherapy."

Going beyond a passive nod or a quiet recital of whatever the patient has just said, activist therapists have challenged patients, interrupting, giving advice, suggesting, persuading, questioning, clarifying, even pointing out the ways the patient mistakes the therapist for a parent. Such assertiveness makes therapy a mutual act. Both patient and therapist risk discovering unsuspected material.

When videotape first appeared, some daring therapist tried it out on mental patients in state hospitals. In one test in August 1963 three doctors began videotaping interviews between patient and therapist from behind one-way mirrors. All patients knew they were being recorded. Half the eighty patients saw the tape; half did not. After discharge the half who viewed it showed a much higher cure rate. Drs. Moore, Chernell, and West agreed, "This suggests that the viewing experience does alter the clinical course of the patient and has an effect on the degree of patient improvement."

R. H. Geertsma and R. S. Reivich asked sixty-four hospitalized psychiatric patients to describe themselves on paper as they really were and as they would like to be. A therapist would then interview each patient, and ask the person to write down how he or she remembered acting during the interview. A videotape was then unreeled, followed by a questionnaire, asking: "(1) While watching the videotape playback, I felt. . . . (2) My appearance. . . . (3) I was surprised by. . . . (4) I was reminded of. . . . (5) The experience of watching myself was. . . . (6) Further comments. . . ." Seventy-seven percent of the patients experienced anxiety while watching themselves on replay, but 68 percent found the experience positive—"eye-opening," "interesting," "enlightening," "reassuring," "enjoyable." Seventeen percent were hostile—"disgusting," "not very encouraging," "sickening," "heartbreaking," "depressing," "dumb," "awful." Clearly such a confrontation with one's own image has an emotional effect.

Dr. Milton Berger, professor of psychiatry at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons, a man who has thought and talked more about video therapy than anyone else, argues: "Seeing one's self and reflectively re-experiencing meaningful interactions frequently allows a person to acknowledge something about himself which he has not previously been ready to accept from either therapist or other patients who have themselves been more or less ambivalent about making the necessary but perhaps painful confrontation. Once this self-perception has taken

www.americanradiohistory.com

place the patient is much more open to validation by his group, which can become more caring, meaningful and constructive and is less likely to be experienced as criticizing or attacking."

The overall rationale resembles that of Carl Rogers. "Video playback allows the patient to obtain a clearer picture of what in his personality was thought by him to be private but actually is visible to the public-at-large and influences them in their ways of reacting to him. It may also allow him to learn much about himself which was formerly secret to himself. It is of great import to the patient when he learns that what was secret to himself about himself was in fact known and overt to others."

Most women comment on their own looks; most men on their own energy and strength; both sexes use video to reflect on their own degree of sexuality. In people who are only neurotic, not crazy, such self-study often leads to unsuspected praise. But habitual self-criticism soon crops up. One woman's first reaction was resistance. "The idea absolutely terrifies me."

Berger asked, "What idea?"

"The idea of being watched."

"What about it?"

"It has to do with hiding. I tend to build up little fronts which aren't really me—and if someone is *really* watching, they're bound to see the *real* me. (Silence.) I know logically I don't have anything to hide."

"So what do you hide?"

"I hide feelings—negative feelings—hate feelings—tense feelings—anxieties. When my feelings are hurt, a lot of times I don't show that—I can't take criticism—I react like inside I don't want to react and I try to hide that. I act very blasé—when I was younger people used to think I was self-assured but inside I was a nervous wreck and I show it more now. I also don't show love or liking. I'm embarrassed to show I like a boy a lot. Then there is the other thing about hiding my body. I never wear very tight clothes—that's hiding—but there is a little part of me that wants to be found out and hopes I'll still be liked."

Another patient attacked the whole idea before even trying it. "I'm angry about it. I'm afraid it means more mechanization and more depersonalization and distraction. I immediately think of Orwell's *1984*."

Avoidance becomes very obvious once the tape is available to be shown —obvious to the patient, not just to the therapist. One week a patient came in and exploded. The next week, calmer, she had forgotten her own violence, until the therapy group urged her to watch a replay. After seeing that, she said, "Thank you. Now I know what it means when people say I'm high. I never understood. I always felt the same. I never could have gone through this if all of you weren't here, and I never realized before that you must really care about me to put up with all of this."

Patients begin to see their own ways of defending against feelings they consider painful or embarrassing. One man said, "Watching myself as I

www.americanradiohistory.com

said the words is like an actor reading words—it's like I'm casual—it's just chitchat—I smooth it all out, the level I show has nothing to do with my real feeling inside, like moments when I talked of getting her pregnant, or going to Boston to see her, which I'm very nervous about. I saw how I wiped my brow with my hand, but I didn't really say how I feel scared and tense inside about going with her—because if she likes it or not, it could change my life. I'm kind of awed by the application of this machinery. . . . You know, I like the picture of myself—I look likable."

Another patient, a thirty-eight-year-old woman said, "When I saw myself on videotape playback with our Tuesday group, I was fascinated by the fact that I could feel such clearcut feelings inside myself and yet would project a watered-down bland version of myself which had no piercing quality! When I see myself on your television I see the blandest kind of cream-of-wheat-type person—just a terribly nice person—as if my personality had no cutting edge at all. It sickens me. As if I wasn't in focus—was not a clear-cut personality—as if I had no well-defined edges—like Sara who had been in our group had and could project without saying a word—just with a look!"

Recognizing the way they hide their feelings, patients must soon admit the feelings. First comes the recognition of repression. "I react so poorly emotionally, so poorly. I don't react emotionally at all. [What stands out for you?] My voice; I feel it is a sort of studied calmness, my hands and my emotions are sort of studied. There's a sort of restraint. I don't show anger. In my opinion when I react my voice is held back, everything is held down.

Then comes the surfacing of the dangerous feelings—so dangerous they had been tamped down for years. "I'd like no strains, obligations or responsibilities; just to be carefree and happy is the way I guess I want to feel. This is something I could not talk about with my husband. [Is it possible that the fact that this is how you are really, that is, that you don't come through with strong feelings is also the way you are in bed with your husband?] It could be. [Therefore, the lack of this masculine output which you complain of in him may be a response which is in relationship to your lack of response. Maybe you both feed each other a similar message.] H'm. I was not unaware of this. When we were first married I didn't have those kinds of feelings.

Sometimes a person can see both signals she gives out—come hither and stay away. A twenty-four-year-old woman saw how she had kept the mannerisms of sixteen, despite having grown into adult desires. "I come through as if I'm not really sure that I know what I mean or what I want."

Here the nonverbal cues, caught by video, belie her stated intentions, shaking her head in a no while saying yes. Berger puts enormous stress on this aspect of video replay. "Stopping the playback at times when a characteristic facial, hand or body movement or position of the patient is presented may allow the patient and therapist to focus in on this behavior

www.americanradiohistory.com

which has had impact on you the therapist or on others and which the patient has been either unaware of or aware of only to some marginal degree.

"At other times it is important for therapeutic progress to stop, and to examine or play a second or third time a portion of the tape which reveals something about the patients' functioning which is a surprise to both the patient and therapist. Such moments are found to be common with videotape. It encourages humility in the therapist to realize how much really is transpiring that he is not conscious of, yet which is significant."

Pointing out such unforeseen moments, confronting the patient with the signals his unconscious is making through his body, can provoke an emotional crisis. One chronic schizophrenic was stunned: "I haven't changed since I was six years old. I thought I was growing up, but I am acting there as if I were a six-year-old boy. I haven't grown up at all."

Spotting the childishness within adult acts helps push a patient to recognize how much he as a kid adopted his parent's stance toward life. Aron looked at his videotape image and said, "I see my father's face, my father's eyes, and I get sad and get the same feeling he had—that life is bad—don't trust people—don't have any friends unless they can do something for you. I'm still holding on now to what I had in childhood—the same impassivity in my face—and the ways of controlling my mother and father to get what I wanted by getting sick. There I look like my father sitting by the window—looking out at the world—apart from it—isolated. He had the same pursed look on his eyebrows, and his eyes were sometimes expressionless and sometimes yearning. He didn't know how to smile."

The recognition helped Aron loosen up, freeing himself from physical and emotional patterns he had learned thirty years before. Three months later Aron watched his new self: "I still remember the first time I saw myself on the playback. I was flattened, masklike. I think I used the word 'stone-faced' as if there were no movement. Now I notice a little more mobility and a more relaxed and a more expressive face. My face before was formless and now there is form. My face before was closed and now it's beginning to be a little more open."

Berger comments, "In my experience with videotape in private practice, I have seen such a recognition trigger startling shock reactions which were important milestones for therapeutic insight and progress. For example, Clara, an overweight, quiet, passive-aggressive, thirty-five-year-old married mother of two school children was taken aback by experiencing a selected videotape playback of herself in interaction during a group session. She had been reared in an unloving home with a double-binding, inconsistent mother and a cruel, intermittently absent ne'er-do-well alcoholic father. She said, 'I looked at myself and saw my mother. I nearly dropped dead! It's like a look of distaste or suspicion and as if she smelled something bad. God, I never realized that I had this look—that I looked like this in repose and when I was just looking at somebody. And I also

www.americanradiohistory.com

noticed this real ploppy-blobby expression—and with a real double chin. I never knew that. . . . My husband has been telling me that for years. I look sleepy and all doped up and I thought of my father, too—ugh! It was quite a surprise—I never knew I looked that way. And oh! my voice . . . it's this high little-girl voice with a definite pattern of rrr-rrr-rrr—and up and down singsongy effect.' "

Such activity—watching the tape, facing the truth, consciously experiencing the previously repressed feelings—strengthens part of the mind, the observing ego. Other parts of our mind accept fantasy as a substitute for real food, real sex, real expression of anger. Only the ego can tell if we are really being satisfied, really expressing our selves. And video bolsters this natural power of perception.

Within small groups undergoing therapy together, video offers other advantages. The patients can see those thousand small details of interaction with other people from an almost objective standpoint. Habitual ways of relating to others can be pointed out verbally over and over, but only when they are seen will some patients admit what is so obvious to a neutral observer. The tone says more than the words; the grimace takes back the polite phrase. One man habitually responded to his wife with a certain "face"—frighteningly serious, semiscientific. She pointed to it on video, "Yes! That is what gives us so much trouble! When he looks that way I don't know where I am with him then. When he looks that way I feel very insecure, very anxious." Berger then led the husband into the images associated with that face—he had inherited it from his father—and showed him how he used that look as a weapon.

Norman Kagan, who supervises counselors at Michigan State University, outlines a psychological fact that video helps prove: "We had repeatedly observed in Interpersonal Process Recall sessions that people perceive and understand much more of the communication of each other than one would suspect as one observes the interaction. It appears that people 'read' each other's subtle communications fairly well, but as socialized beings pretend that they read only the surface phenomena."

Video, then, helps overcome false naïveté, tuning out, repressing, hiding—but only when the individual himself wants to find out what is going on. As Gattegno suggests, such deep learning begins with our own will, and no learning, no therapy, will occur without that initial impulse. Once that arises, though, video seems to imitate, then to reinforce the watchful ego.

In the process the group tends to draw closer. Simple replay shows up each member's defenses as failures. The reasoning becomes: Since your feelings show anyway, why not show them in the first place? Ron Blumer says, "Face and body language are isolated on the TV screen and become more readily visible. During the actual situation they are equally important but may not be consciously recognized. Thus the video distortion takes place in the direction of what people are feeling rather than what

www.americanradiohistory.com

they are saying, or, it may be argued, what they are really saying as opposed to the words they are mouthing. Thus video acts as a probe below the surface of a situation. There is a tremendous pressure to be sincere sometimes beyond the bounds of social niceties."

Already we can begin to see why video came to be seen as an important tool for pulling together the people in a larger community. But before we move on to that subject, let me give Dr. Berger one last paragraph, in which he justifies video to his colleagues. How far this language is from ordinary speech, how sad that the commonsensical Dr. Berger must drop his Portapak to pile up the gobbledygook. What can video do for therapy? He answers:

"Through a videotape confrontation of self alone and with others, one can become more familiar with his own anatomical, psychic, emotional and attitudinal identity and become clearer about the impact of this self on others as well as about the impact of others on self. Heightened self-awareness can lead to deeper knowledge of self, including one's transferential transactions. This increased scope of knowledge can serve as an enlarged basis for wholeheartedly working through what needs to be given up because of the crippling consequences of such neurotic distortions and thus allow a patient a chance to function more realistically and with greater authenticity."

The foregoing article is extracted from "Video Visions", published by the New American Library. © copyright 1977 by Johnathan Price.

Jonathan Price is an author, teacher and conceptual artist. He is director of the Shakespeare Institute at the University of Bridgeport in Connecticut. He was formerly artist-in-residence at the WNET, (New York) Television Laboratory. With John Lahr, he is the author of "Life Show". His work has also appeared in Harper's and Art News.

www.americanradiohistory.com

97,000,000

OUT OF 100,000,000 INHABITANTS IN JAPAN ARE REACHED BY TBS TELEVISION AND RADIO NETWORK

RADIO—950KHz
TELEVISION—ch.6

TBS

TOKYO BROADCASTING SYSTEM INC. 東京放送

www.americanradiohistory.com

VIACOM!
THE FIRST NAME IN FIRST-RUN PROGRAMMING.

Viacom

www.americanradiohistory.com

"ALL★STAR ANYTHING GOES"

"FAMILY FEUD"

"LITTLE VIC"

"THE $128,000 QUESTION"

"THE PRICE IS RIGHT"

"THE $25,000 PYRAMID"

www.americanradiohistory.com

Now You Can Talk Back to the Big Eye

By LES BROWN

Mr. and Mrs. Columbus sit on the sofa weighing the decision of what to watch. On the wife's lap is a sleek black unit resembling an oversize pocket calculator that contains 30 white buttons for 30 channel choices.

Shall it be one of the commercial or public television stations—perhaps one from another city? Those would be activated in column "A." Shall it be one of the community channels in column "B," the one offering news, the one offering electronic games?

Or, they ask, shall we buy a program from column "C"? A new movie such as "New York, New York," an old Marx Brothers film, a soccer game, a nightclub act, tennis lessons?

The button is pushed for one of the community channels. Someone is holding a garage sale. Mr. Columbus has his eye on the lawnmover. When it comes up for sale, he pushes the black response button, and the purchase is made. The computer will bill him for it at the end of the month.

★ ★ ★

On another community channel the announcer asks the Columbuses how they plan to vote on the new school-bond issue. The top black response button on the lap console is for "yes." The bottom button for "no." Seconds later, the announcer gives the results of the straw poll. It looks as if the bond issue may be in trouble.

The pressing of another button brings up "All in the Family." After that, the Columbuses will buy a movie.

This is the scenario for the television of the future—not the distant television future that has been talked about for so many years, but the very near future. On Dec. 1, in fact, the scene may be played in thousands of households in Columbus, Ohio, a classic test market for many products and the one chosen by Warner Communications for the first large-scale commercial test of bidirectional, or two-way, cable television.

★ ★ ★

Cable television has had wide acceptance in rural areas of the United States where over-the-air television reception is poor or where only one or two stations are available. But it has floundered in the major cities, where the normal television service is ample.

www.americanradiohistory.com

"We think the way to get urban people to want cable is to offer them a multiplicity of services," said Gustave M. Hauser, chairman and chief executive of Warner Cable Corporation. "Cable can offer an incredible number of exotic communications services, but the problem is first to get it into the homes for a monthly rental fee."

Another problem, he said, is knowing how much to charge for each of the services or the pay-television programming. "This is a brand-new business, and we haven't yet figured out a scale of prices. Obviously, the more people who use a particular service, the cheaper it can be," he said.

At present, Warner Cable charges $7.50 a month for the basic one-way service. That would be increased for the more sophisticated two-way equipment. There would be no extra charge for the 10 over-the-air stations or the 10 community channels, but each of the special services would carry an additional fee.

"The fair price for a movie might be the price charged for a single admission at the theater—still a bargain, because any number can watch. But we're not sure about that yet, either," Mr. Hauser said.

The Warner franchise in Columbus covers about half the city and is available to approximately 100,000 homes, but the company's present cable system—similar to those offered in other cities, such as New York—has only 26,000 subscribers. With the new two-way system currently in preparation, Mr. Hauser hopes to increase markedly the number of subscribers and the sources of revenue.

★ ★ ★

The Columbus project is being carefully watched by the rest of the cable-television industry, which for five or six years has been looking for ways to penetrate the cities profitably.

Chiefly what makes the new Columbus system different from existing cable-television installations is its two-way capability, achieved with dual cable lines. One line brings the television pictures into the home, the other carries digital signals from the pushbutton device in the household to computers at the transmission center.

This method permits the viewer to participate in television. The response buttons on the console make possible the taking of academic exams on television and the playing of quiz games, as well as the purchasing of products and the participation in straw polls.

"We find that people like to be involved with television beyond watching it," Mr. Hauser said. "Maybe it is a response to loneliness, but they seem to welcome being asked questions that they can answer by pushing buttons."

★ ★ ★

The bidirectional mode also permits the system to offer a number of different pay-television events simultaneously, on separate channels, and for the viewer to pay only for the events watched. Conventional cable

www.americanradiohistory.com

systems, by contrast, charge a monthly fee for one or two pay-television channels that offer, in effect, potluck fare; the viewer pays the same monthly fee whether he watches one program on the pay channel or all of them.

The box-office approach to pay television has tantalizing implications for the motion-picture industry. Under the Warner system, each film studio can receive a percentage of the actual receipts for a specific movie, instead of a flat predetermined fee for the use of a movie on a standard pay channel.

The same computer that bills the viewer for the lawn mower he buys at a televised garage sale also produces an itemized bill for all pay-television programming watched. The billing begins two minutes after the viewer has tuned in the channel, giving him some time to change his mind.

Subscribers to the system soon to be activated in Columbus will have a key to lock off the pay channels to prevent children or baby-sitters from making unauthorized purchases. They will also have an option, for a small extra fee, of adding burglar- and fire-alarm services that will operate through the two-way cable.

Warners is calling the new system "Qube," pronounced "cube." The name is not an acronym and has no real meaning, Mr. Hauser said. It has a catchy sound and is a form of packaging.

"We have to overcome some negative feelings about cable television in Columbus," Mr. Hauser explained. "After all, 70 percent of the people who could have cable there have turned it down. With this new system we can hear those people saying, 'Here comes cable again in a new wrapper.' So we've given it a new name."

© *Copyright 1977 by the N.Y. Times Co. Reprinted by permission.*

Les Brown, television editor of The New York Times, is a graduate of Roosevelt University, Chicago. He is the author of "Television: The Business Behind the Box" and The New York Times Encyclopaedia of Television published by The Times Book Company.

www.americanradiohistory.com

THE SIGN OF GOOD TELEVISION

www.americanradiohistory.com

"Happy News"? No! It's Time for the Real Stuff.

By GABE PRESSMAN

When I left the newspaper business in the middle '50's, television news was in its infancy. Since then we have become big business. More time is given over to news along with vastly more money. In times of national stress or crisis, we have performed memorable public service.

But somewhere along the way we've lost our identity, or perhaps a piece of our soul. Some of the high purpose is gone. And our loss is the public's loss.

While the early years of TV news were fired by a sense of mission, a feeling that one had to be totally honest and dedicated because news *mattered,* today the tone has changed. The trend of the last decade has been toward trivialization. Too many news programs now emphasize the frivolous and the violent. The result has been a denigration of audience intelligence and an erosion of the tough, aggressive news tradition we once had.

In my judgment, the deterioration began in the 1960's with the birth of "happy news." That concept took root in the Mid-west under the aegis of a consulting firm, McHugh-Hoffman. They and other consultants, such as Frank Magid, have had enormous impact on local news throughout the country. At the moment, one of the networks is tailoring its news to the show-biz specifications of a consulting firm.

You all know the rationale behind "happy news." You survey your audience to discover which newsmen have the most charm, sex appeal and photogenic pizazz. Then you build them up, encourage them to show off —"humanize" them, if you will.

The supreme example of this theory translated to action happened in San Francisco. An avid-for-ratings station dressed its news staff in cowboy costumes and transported them to a ranch. There they were photographed in movie star poses, presumably shouting "Yippee!" the while. All this was for a promotional campaign. News cowboys rounding up stories for the late evening news. (Ed Murrow, thou shouldst be living at this hour!)

This "happy news" notion is justified in some quarters by the question, "Who likes the neighbor who comes in every night with bad news?"

www.americanradiohistory.com

News consultants love to remind station owners that the Greeks used to kill the messenger who brought woeful tidings.

With news consulting now a growth industry, newscasts in scores of cities are emphasizing personalities, inside jokes, sex stories, murder stories and social trivia. News as news—the events that shape our lives and enter the history books—is carefully de-emphasized. It is not, you see, unfailingly happy. Sometimes the old world has a bad day. But you'd never suspect it to hear the banter between the "anchor personality" and the "sports personality."

In the course of his years "on the road" for CBS, Charles Kuralt has spent a thousand nights in motel rooms, watching the tube. His primary impression, he told a lecture audience, is "lots of hair."

The young men and women delivering the news are always "styled." Blow-dried, lacquered, fluffed, sculptured and so on. They read with much animation but little comprehension. On a newspaper, few of them would last a week.

Doubtless the entire industry, coast to coast, has heard the story of how a TV weatherman in New York, Tex Antoine, lost his job one night. Commenting on an earlier news story, dealing with rape, Tex was moved to tell his audience, "Well, if you're going to be raped, relax and enjoy it."

The audience objected strenuously, suggesting that there are more old-fashioned viewers out there than news consultants like to think.

I do not condone Tex's offhand remark. But I do feel a certain sympathy for him. His faux pas, his bad taste, was the logical outcome of years of news corruption. It's a strong word, but there is something morally wrong in treating a legitimate business—the news operation—as a new kind of vaudeville.

The journalistic barbarians, so busy truncating hard facts and attenuating light banter, have made the nightly newscasts a mockery in some areas. They are the ones who bear the guilt for Tex Antoine's quip about rape. He was only saying what he thought was expected of him. Wasn't he Tex, the funny weatherman?

It is said that the worst excesses of "happy news" are on the wane. But once corruption has set in, it's hard to restore that old-time excellence. The feeling that all who dealt with news had a special trust, a duty to inform, explain, tell us what kind of a day it has been.

At too many stations, men entrusted with vital news decisions are not trained newsmen. They are journalistic infidels. And when pressured to hire a minority reporter, they seek not experience or intelligence but a light skinned individual with regular features. That, in television, is news-biz.

Regrettably, even the three networks have begun to list toward "happy news" and inside jokes.

Last winter I heard an anchorman tell of a managerial shake-up at a

www.americanradiohistory.com

rival network, NBC. The status of President Julian Goodman was suddenly changed. Said the anchorman, "I understand Julian has a new office —right near the peacock."

Tom Snyder, during his year at NBC News in New York used to make bitter jests at the expense of the weatherman, Dr. Frank Field, who was not always amused. Double-entendre was another Snyder speciality. Not a criminal offense, to be sure, but inappropriate on the evening news.

Have the news consultants ever asked the audience, "Are you tired of hearing one newsman ask another, 'Did you have a good weekend, Charlie?' "

During station breaks, the news panel at one local station has been ordered to "relate to each other." Not feeling relaxed enough to converse they all smile and mumble, "Relate . . . relate . . . relate." To the home folks it looks like amiable chatter.

At my home station, Metromedia's Channel 5 in New York, we have an anchorman with a worn, creased face. He is not glamorous or pretty. Our reporters scorn makeup. They look as if they'd been working a 12 hour day. And they have.

We don't take ourselves so seriously that we are smug and boring. But we take the news seriously. We do investigative reporting. We have exposed a lot of corrupt practice in the city government. We ask embarrassing questions of bureaucrats and politicians.

Not long ago John O'Connor of the New York *Times* quoted David Brinkley as saying it was time TV had its own standards and judgments regarding the news. Time, in other words, to reject the standards established by other news media.

"What I suggest," said Brinkley, "is that news judgments developed by newspapers and wire services over generations may be fine for them, but not for us. . . . We should not bore the audience any more than necessary."

Frankly, I don't know what David Brinkley is talking about. Though presentations vary, the basic criteria of what constitutes news do not change. News is news, whether you are preparing your report for a newspaper, magazine, radio or TV.

What Brinkley and his like fail to understand is that day unto day news coverage is still what matters most. *60 Minutes* is a first-rate show, serving its viewers well. Discussions on PBS and documentaries on all networks fill a great need. But the American people still tune in news programs to find out what is happening, at home and abroad. All polls indicate that our citizens rely on TV first—not newspapers, not radio —for their daily news.

For this reason, we need to upgrade our news programs. Only men and women with first class news background should ever be in charge of news operations. Newsmen should hire reporters, anchormen, interviewers, leg-men and the like. News is too important to be left to the vaudevillians.

www.americanradiohistory.com

Instead of relying on wire service copy, TV stations should develop their own news gathering staffs. When critics say that TV news programs should have a magazine format—lots of frivolous features—they are denigrating the value of news. Is the sports page more important than page one?

Gathering news for television is a special art. It requires dogged work, much travelling about the city, an acquaintanceship with the men who run City Hall and a firm background in the area you are covering. It is no game for the pretty boys and girls who sit behind desks with a light playing over their ultra-smart hair-do's.

Owning a television station, according to financial statements, is owning a money machine. Profits have been described often as "indecently high." (The indecency, of course, is hardly visible from the inside.) Given so wide a profit margin, stations ought to invest more in their news operation.

"Because television news is a business," writes Ron Powers in *The Newscasters*, "it is perceived as a profit tool by network presidents and by career salesmen turned station managers who govern its form and content. And yet, except in a few enlightened instances, the problems of television news have never been treated as structural (or management) problems, only as cosmetic ones."

Perhaps the day will come when every newscast will not offer: a "high story count" (less than two minutes per story), an "action reporter" who rescues cats from tall trees, a "team atmosphere" that turns newscasters into jovial, ad lib buffoons, stock footage, also called "visuals" and a weatherman who seems about to break into song.

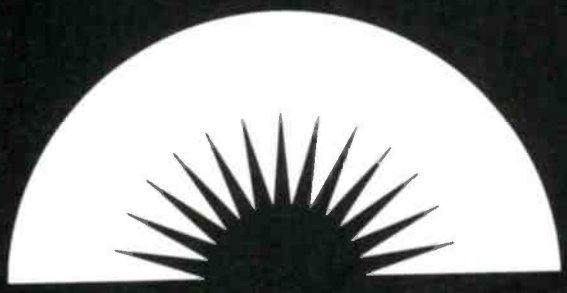
We don't advocate a return to the Stone Age of TV, but in making the news a half hour of jazzed-up trivia television is failing in the duty specified in its charter—serving the public interest. Let's forget "happy news" and concentrate on the real stuff, i.e., what's happening in the world, the country and in your home town.

The preceding article is adapted from an address Mr. Pressman made to the New York Publicity Club.

Gabe Pressman is one of New York's best known TV reporters. His voice and face have been familiar to metropolitan viewers for the past 22 years. During that time he has been on the air every day and every night, first for WNBC, which he joined in 1955, and more recently for WNEW-TV.

Mr. Pressman is a graduate of New York University and first distinguished himself as a reporter for the now defunct World-Telegram and Sun.

www.americanradiohistory.com



Columbia Pictures Television

Let us
Entertain
you.™

www.americanradiohistory.com

From Russia— With Propaganda

By DAVID B. KANIN, Ph.D

We were recently treated to the spectacle of the three networks stumbling over each other in their attempt to obtain television rights to the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow.

CBS wooed the Soviets by using Mary Tyler Moore to show how nice Moscow can be made to look for a Capitalist audience. ABC countered with Roone Arledge and his "experience." NBC took the prize by offering the Olympic host what it really wanted, an incredible sum of money. With all these deliberations, through all the months of negotiations, in all the articles written on the process, one major question of the 1980 Games was ignored. What will be the effect of this largest press invasion of the USSR upon the people who live there?

The Soviet Union will do its best to show a benign face to the world. The natural warmth of the Russian people will be displayed until it becomes a cliche. But what of the rest of the country? Our constant misuse of the name "Russian" makes it look as if we do not care about the rest of the Soviet people. Russians make up only 32% of the Soviet population; the entire Slavic population is a bare majority.

To be sure, American audiences will be treated to examples of quaint customs and colorful folk dances, and more Soviet Georgians will be found who can live 500 years on yogurt. But for Soviet citizens who do not fit accepted molds, who are not serenely happy with their life in the Socialist paradise, the presence of thousands of journalists and of NBC sports will bring nothing but misery.

The USSR cannot afford to allow these people to present an unsatisfactory image of Soviet life. The state will do what it can to prevent a meeting between journalist and dissident by restricting the activities of both.

It will be easy with Soviet citizens. They will be detained. As with such events as the visits of Western heads of state to the USSR, locals who do not represent the desirable face of Socialism will be relegated to some limbo where they can do no harm.

The journalists pose a somewhat more difficult problem, but by no means an insoluble one. The Soviets will be able to use Olympic mythology to sidetrack many of them. Since we are told that the Olympic Games are a festival of sport, and that "politics" have no place in sport,

www.americanradiohistory.com

much of the media will be content to cover the Games as if only fun and friendship were involved. "Human interest" will mean discussion of Moscow night life and analysis of the pancake and chocolate breakfasts of marathon runners.

The curious and the skeptical will find very few unhappy citizens to talk with. It is likely that the "Olympic villages" for the latter will be on the itinerary of media people, who presumably will be there for the action.

The USSR is taking one further step to ensure favorable coverage of the Games. It is building a huge new press center which will put every facility imaginable at reporters' fingertips. This is nothing new—each Olympic host tries to dazzle the journalists who report on the host country to millions around the world.

While a few people have scoffed at the ability of the USSR to create such a center, it is my belief that this command post will be at the top of Soviet priorities. The Soviets will be anxious for the media to have every convenience at hand—so that reporters have to leave the building as little as possible. This hermetically sealed environment will be a further, more subtle, method of controlling the Western press. In addition, Soviet camera operators will have some control over what we see (the extent of this will not be clear until the Games themselves are underway).

NBC has won the rights to the Olympic Games, and therefore to an advertising bonanza. It has also bought the responsibility to cover the real stories in the Olympic host state. If the network decides to limit its coverage to sport, it will be condemning Soviet citizens to another unnoticed violation of the human rights. The Olympic Games will provide the perfect political and cultural forum at which to publicize the constant Soviet violations of the Helsinki Agreement, if only the American press will pay attention to what goes on around the Games. It will be an appropriate forum, since the Olympics have *always* had as much political content as sporting action.

In 1936 the media gave Jesse Owens a big play, while ignoring both the fate of a million Jews in Germany and of American black people. Whether or not the repressed peoples of the USSR will get some attention to offset the Socialist propaganda dominating the Games of the twenty-second Olympiad will depend on the risks television is willing to take. If the suffering of Soviet citizens is not covered by the network whose presence in Moscow exacerbates it, then the USSR will have succeeded in erecting another Potemkin Village—a tragic sham.

Dr. David Kanin received his Ph.D from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. He is an instructor in International Relations at Framingham State College in Massachusetts and a lecturer in European Diplomatic History at Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Mass.

www.americanradiohistory.com

TIME-LIFE TELEVISION
presents

THE HAROLD LLOYD COMEDY SERIES

CONSISTING OF:

11 FEATURE FILM COMEDY CLASSICS

PLUS a 90-Minute Off-Network TV Special starring Dick Van Dyke

And...

starring
HAROLD LLOYD
The Academy Award-Winning
"Master Comedian"

TIME LIFE TELEVISION

TIME & LIFE BUILDING
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10020
(212) 556-7783
(212) 556-7775

ATLANTA (404) 659-8050 • CHICAGO (312) 329-7835 • LOS ANGELES (213) 385-8151

... to be continued.

www.americanradiohistory.com

One 'News Minutes', Please!

By MARVIN KITMAN

Reading Time: One minute, more or less
Speed Reading Time: 0.43 seconds

NBC invented the prime time News Minute in 1974 with a breathless interruption called *Update.* Tom Synder was the interrupter, urgent, magnetic, teeth set for disaster. He didn't present that minute of news at 8:59 P.M.—he *was* the news.

CBS showed consideration to a sponsor and waited for its *Bicentennial Minute* to end its run before jumping on the News Minute bandwagon. Nobody expected a network to expend two complete minutes imparting pure information.

Then one night, without fanfare, there was the tough of real life in the long night of fantasy. Here was the "I'm Morton Dean. . . . More News Later" show. Its format was business-like. Four news briefs and a maundering little talk by Julie London—about the beauty of a certain face wash.

Naturally, ABC wasn't going to be left in limbo without a News Minute of its own. Something teasing, a little jazzy. And so it came to pass on March 14, 1977, that we were suddenly hit by an *ABC Newsbrief.*

ABC News has always been third in the hearts of its countrymen. Until recently it was always third in everything. I do try to watch ABC News now and then. When, for example, the NBC transmitter crashes to earth. Or when guerilla hordes seize the CBS studios.

Naturally, a *News Minute* is nothing without an anchor man. Tom Jarriel, who was ABC's White House correspondent for seven years, won the plum job of anchoring the *ABC Newsbrief.* Soon he was doing what vaudevillians would call the old two-a-day. He burst on the screen with some breathless headlines shortly after lunch—2 P.M. or thereabouts—and again around 10 P.M.

Like so much that we see on the tube, the one minute news show is less than it seems. It rarely lasts a full minute. The time is too valuable. ABC's alleged news minute, in prime time, actually lasts 41 seconds. The matinee performance may be longer, since there are fewer commercials.

While ABC may have lacked a certain genius in its news programming (before Roone Arledge took over, that is) it always knew—the way dogs and ponies know—how to repeat a basic trick. Over and over, on cue and

www.americanradiohistory.com

timed to the second. Thus we have, in addition to *Afternoon Newsbrief* and *Evening Newsbrief* a Sunday feature called *ABC Minute Magazine.* This novelty first flagged our attention on a bleak Sunday in March. It must have been a day when all the world leaders who ordinarily make news had stayed in bed for the weekend. The lead story—in fact, the only story—had to do with a three inch fish, the snail darter.

It seems that everybody had assumed the snail darter to be extinct. He wasn't listed in the tropical fish store catalogs. He wasn't lying on a bed of ice at the fish market. And nobody recalled seeing snail darter, broiled or fried, on any menu. He had found his immortality among the fossils, that fish.

But suddenly thousands of snail darters turned up in Tennessee, where they'd apparently been hiding out since the Pleistocene Age. Zoologists, marine biologists, pisciculture buffs were excited, you can bet.

Incredibly, this three inch fish, presumed dead for a million years, had stopped construction of a multimillion dollar dam in Tennessee. Zoologists were suddenly afraid the prodigal snail darter would become extinct all over again.

Bill Wordham of the ABC news staff, was the just-a-minute man for this "magazine" feature. He explained that a U.S. court had considered the case of the darter vs. the dam. Its conclusion: the need to protect a rare, endangered species of fish outweighs the need for more electrical power.

After digesting this news minute, I heard myself asking a question ABC might well have pondered. To wit, "Don't you think there are certain subjects that require more than a minute to explore?"

Of course, I can think of a few subjects that don't require a minute. Subjects about which everything can be said in a minisecond. Farrah Fawcett-Majors, for example. Lee Majors, for another example. You could cover all three of *Charlie's Angels* in a one-minute magazine feature and have time left for a Boys' Life biography of Fred Silverman, the head creative thinker at ABC.

ABC's *Minute Magazine* may be the most frustrating program on the air. Whatever the subject, I know they were leaving out all the vital details. There are secrets I'm not allowed to share. (I am, of course, a well-known paranoiac.)

There's another flaw in these one-minute news breaks. They sound too much like "promos." That is, "Stay tuned for 'All in the Family' as Archie goes for a bank loan." The tone is similar, as are the desperate gasps for breath.

What, we must finally ask, are the virtues of the one-minute newscast? What are the values of this new character, the Minute Man hollering the news?

This is what bothers me. There is no special virtue and the newsman seems to have misplaced his sense of values. If a big, dramatic story is

www.americanradiohistory.com

breaking, obviously your station will have a special, in-depth report.

The networks, however, regard the one-minute news interruption as a smart move. There is talk at one network that the Evening News will be discarded and 30 one-minute news specials aired in its place.

The public is charmed, networks say, by the news briefs. They're a touch of salt in a bland evening. They remind people that the network could, if it chose, stop entertaining us any hour of the day and instead tell us what is going on in Real Life.

Viewers who find news reports frightening or depressing say wistfully that a bit of jokey news ought to be mixed in with the straight, just to keep us on our toes. A sample capsule: "Another senseless killing in the Bronx today. Irving Senseless, 39, was found murdered in his basement apartment. . . ."

And this one may yet be heard: "Here's your news *Update*. . . Huge rocks fall from the sky over Texas. . . Enormous crack reported across continental USA. . . Sun failed to come up this morning. . . Details on this, and other stories, at 11. . . ."

Obviously, this won't do. When the end of the world comes, says a lady of my acquaintance, she wants to hear it from Walter Cronkite. And he'll insist on more than a minute.

Marvin Kitman is television critic for the newspaper, Long Island Newsday. He is the author of several humorous books, including "George Washington's Expense Account" and "You Can't Judge a Book by Its Cover." He lives in Leonia, N. J., with his wife, three children and three television sets.

www.americanradiohistory.com

METROMEDIA, INC.

BROADCASTING
Metromedia Television
Metromedia Radio
Metro TV Sales
Metro Radio Sales

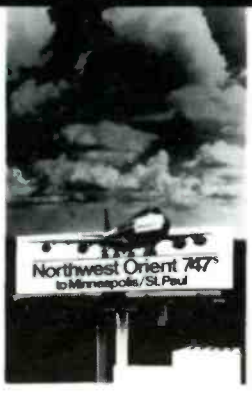
OUT-OF-HOME MEDIA
Foster & Kleiser
Metro Transit Advertising

PUBLISHING AND MAIL MARKETING
Metromail Advertising
Cole Publications

ENTERTAINMENT
Metromedia Producers Corporation
Ice Capades
Ice Capades Chalet
Harlem Globetrotters

BROADCASTING

OUT-OF-HOME MEDIA



PUBLISHING AND MAIL MARKETING

ENTERTAINMENT

www.americanradiohistory.com

Twenty Years of Prime Time

By JOEL PERSKY, Ph.D.

If that cliche, "Variety is the spice of life" has any merit, nowhere is it less applicable than to television viewing.

We all know the standard criticism: that television programming is bland, slick, unimaginative and duplicative. Viewers say it, critics write it. People keep their sets on from five to seven hours a day. The other hours are devoted to complaining about the entertainment that has kept them glued to the box five, six or seven hours.

Certainly we have all felt, in recent years, that our viewing choices are increasingly limited. We detect a sameness, a rehash of the old hash.

Some of us are old enough to remember when an embarrassment of riches came pouring out of the tube. We think fondly on the Golden Age —so-called—of the 1950's when the variety of programs seemed staggering. Each evening created new dilemmas. Should we watch Channel 2 or Channel 4? The variety hour or the mystery drama?

Since family tastes vary, those were the days when a prosperous family discovered it couldn't live without a second—and maybe a third—TV set.

These vague feelings are actually substantive. The notion that the viewer of the 1970's has fewer program options than the viewer of previous decades can be confirmed by a comparison of the 1955–56, 1965–66 and 1975–76 prime time series schedules. A quantitative study of the program logs of the three commercial networks shows conclusively that the TV audience today is faced with a diminishing supply of alternatives. Truly, we had a richer variety in the old days.

Programming trends and patterns can be ascertained by comparing the same time periods for each of the three networks. The mid-season weeks of 4–10 February 1956, 5–11 February 1966 and 31 January–6 February 1976 were selected. By studying the networks' programs for these periods the contention that there are fewer choices than in the past is supported by extrapolated data.

Consider the following:

Number of Network Series in Prime Time

1956	123
1966	97
1976	67

www.americanradiohistory.com

These figures chronicle a steady decline in the number of series, a reduction of almost 50 per cent. With so few series in production there is less opportunity for the training and testing of new talent, less opportunity for experiment, for innovation.

A significant by-product of this decline is a loss of employment for actors, writers, directors and other creative people. Not only do audiences have fewer programs to choose among, they see fewer personalities, receive less stimuli, feel less exhilaration.

More important, perhaps, than the decline in the total number of series is the change in formats. Three general categories of programs are drama, variety and talk shows. In dramatic programming we see a major shift from domestic drama to crime-detective-mystery. In 1956 and 1966 there were only two crime-detective series each season. In 1976 there were 18.

This nine-fold increase in programming which is inherently violent may well explain why 1977 has seen a strenuous outcry against TV violence. The public's visceral feeling about violence is further substantiated by a study of programming trends.

The showing of feature films was a minor element in 1956 programming. Hollywood and the TV industry were bare-fanged competitors in those days. TV was blamed for the closing of movie houses across the country.

By 1976, the showing of feature films on TV had increased 400 per cent. This further reduced the choices available to viewers. Movies usually ran from 90 minutes to two hours. There was suddenly less room for the old half hour and hour-long TV shows.

Other changes may be noted in passing. In 1966 there were 36 choices in the field of comedy-drama. In 1976 the number was 23. "Action-adventure"—the shows usually scarred by violent passages—reached a peak in 1966. There were 15 of that genre on the air. In 1976 there were four.

The musical-variety hour, once a great favorite, has also been in sharp decline. There were ten such shows in 1966. There were three in 1976.

While a glance at your nightly TV schedule will show that the half hour show is still alive and flourishing, it has long since passed its prime. In 1956, when TV was young, the dial was awash in half hour formats —101 of them. By 1966 the number had dropped to 56. And in 1976 it was 23.

Using the same 20 year interval, we find that one hour series went from 20 to 36 to 37, as of last year. Significantly, there were no 90 minute series in 1976 but there were six two hour series.

The foregoing figures may be viewed as a microcosm of the enormous change in the design of the viewing schedule. The trend has been steady in the direction of fewer and longer programs. What does this portend?

Fewer—and costlier—series means heavy reliance on a few producers

www.americanradiohistory.com

with "track records." It means the evolution of a costly star system. Advertisers must spend more and more money on fewer and fewer spots. Thus, as in the theatre, the modest success, the good but not Top Ten rating, is tantamount to failure.

We have also seen a few production companies monopolize the principal half hours. If it isn't a Norman Lear show it's probably a Mary Tyler Moore production.

Old time viewers probably miss the day of the 39 week season. If a series started on the wrong foot, it had time to correct its errors, to build an audience. Now a show can be erased from the screen after one or two episodes, as happened in the case of Lee Grant's *Fay*.

Today a series can run from six to 18 to 24 episodes. And we have seen the emergence of the "second season," the arrival of new shows in January to fill the gaps left by early failures. Sometimes a third season gets under way in March. That's also the month we begin to see re-runs, the re-runs that used to start in June.

Even the definition of prime time has changed. In 1956 and '66 the networks had three and a half hours of prime time each evening. Thus the total prime time programming, seven nights a week, was seventy three and a half hours.

Nowadays—with the 7:30 spot turned back to local option—prime time is three hours a night and only 63 hours a week. The drop in series choices can therefore be explained—in part—by the reduction in hours available. But—and it's a significant but—a reduction of only ten and a half hours a week does not explain a loss of 56 separate series for the period 1956 through 1976.

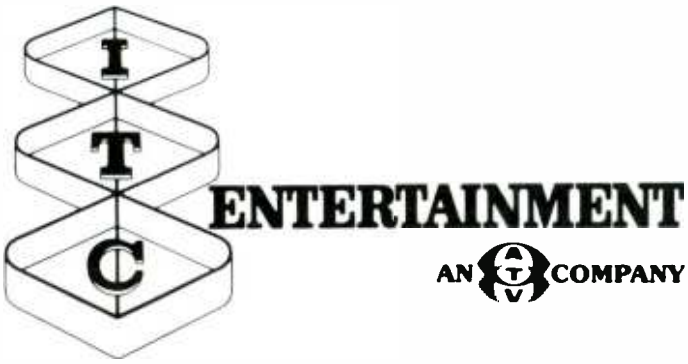
All institutions must evolve, and some of the changes are bound to be construed as a falling off of quality. Television viewers are creatures of habit—or they would like to be—and some changes have discomfited the steady audience that lives vicariously through TV.

When long-time viewers talk about the old days, the shows they are sure to mention are Playhouse 90, the Kraft Television Theatre, the Sunday night Philco dramas, the Pultizer Prize series, and the Show of Shows. They rarely mention the "spectaculars" that were designed to sell color sets. They cherish memories of Lucille Ball, Ed Wynn and Eve Arden. They're hard-put to remember the high-priced "specials."

Fewer shows, longer shows, that's the wave of the future. Some of us think the old ways—with multiple choices every hour—were infinitely better. It was a viewer's medium then. Now it belongs to the producers.

Joel Persky is an assistant professor in the Television Department at Brooklyn College. He received his doctorate from New York University.

www.americanradiohistory.com



The Company That Entertains The World

www.americanradiohistory.com

The Events Are Here!

In November and December:

"Aspen"

An all-star cast highlights a jet-setting mini-series of skiing, romance and murder.

"The Godfather: The Complete Novel for Television"

Nine hours of superb drama including never-before-seen film.

"The Last Hurrah"

Carroll O'Connor stars in his own teleplay in this Hallmark Hall of Fame production.

"Contract on Cherry Street"

Frank Sinatra makes his dramatic television debut in a special three-hour motion picture filmed on the streets of New York!

"The Hobbit"

An animated film based on the original version written by J.R.R. Tolkein.

"The Next Howling Wind"

Alan Arkin stars in a three-hour fact-based drama directed by Oscar Winner Jan Kadar.

"America Salutes the Queen"

An outstanding array of international talent performs in a special three-hour extravaganza from the London Palladium.

"The History of Recorded Sound"

Traces our musical heritage through the development of the phonograph—from Caruso to The Beatles and beyond.

"The Nutcracker"

Mrs. Betty Ford is the on-camera host for this Bolshoi Ballet production.

NBC Television Network

www.americanradiohistory.com

Kojak in the Kampung

By HEATHER STRANGE, Ph. D.

After dinner, Rahman and Rohima run to the south window of their home which faces their uncle's sitting room a few yards away. They lean over the sill, peering intently in the hope of seeing the magic flicker. The flicker that means Uncle's television set is on!

If there's no flicker, the children are heavy-hearted. If there is, they are at Uncle's house in a trice. Later their father will join them. Their mother, however, will remain at home. She has watched television and found it unrewarding.

Now and then, in the manner of all modern parents, Uncle will threaten to punish the children by witholding TV. They do not believe the threat. Too many people are gathered in front of the screen each night to permit Uncle to deny the children their treat.

★ ★ ★

There are 771 villagers living in 165 households in Rusilia, an agricultural and fishing village in West Malaysia. Since TV was introduced in the early '70's, 15 homes have acquired sets. All are of the large console type with a black and white picture. By income standards of the area, these sets are costly. Imagine what a Rolls Royce would signify to a middle income, split-level family. That's TV in Malaysia.

In local economic terms, a TV set equals a large gleaming refrigerator. Or the cost of running water in an indoor bathroom.

There are eight refrigerators in the village. Six families have piped-in water. Those enjoying the latter also own television sets. But an additional seven families have only TV. They prize that flickering picture above the convenience of running water.

Since the cost is approximately the same, the question must be asked, Why would a family living in primitive conditions, remote from the sophisticated settings of the TV world, prefer that flicker to inside plumbing?

The women, were the choice up to them, would prefer piped-in water. Hauling buckets from a well each day is back-breaking work. But decisions about home life seem to rest with the men and the children. They let Mother worry about the water, and about keeping the food fresh.

Economically, the TV families are of two types: those supported by one (or two) salaried workers, such as a teacher, and those supported by adults engaged in *kerja kampung* or village work. That is, fishing, farming, weaving or shop-keeping.

www.americanradiohistory.com

This distinction is made because the social context of TV viewing differs in the two groups. Relatives and close friends are welcome in all homes, but a villager who is neither a relative nor a close friend would not casually call upon a teacher, simply to chat.

People feel free to call upon those who are of their own class, educationally and economically. Thus the TV owner most likely to have throngs of viewers in his home is the blue collar worker. Guests may number ten or twelve on an ordinary night, and more than thirty when a special program is shown.

Traditional seating arrangements are observed. Men sit together and apart from the women. Children settle where they please. If the host has furniture, the men sit on the sofas and chairs, while women sit on the floor, always separate and apart.

If refreshments are served, it is the women who serve and the men who partake, sharing with the youngest children. Women and older children receive nothing. The gospel of Women's Liberation has not yet arrived.

Programming in Malaysia is varied to suit a broad spectrum of ethnic groups, and to appeal to both urban and rural viewers. The educational programs are surprisingly good. Naturally, there is a special fondness for Malay cultural events, such as demonstrations of *bersilat*, the art of self-defense.

By all odds, the favorite special event of 1975 was the Mohammed Ali-Lyle fight. It was broadcast live, via satellite, from Las Vegas. Though it was on the air during the afternoon, the home where I watched was chock-a-block with visitors. Many had stayed home from work to watch the fight. Everybody rooted for Mohammed Ali, primarily because he is a Muslim like themselves. They like the idea of a Muslim world champion.

Kojak, Hawaii Five-O and Wrestling from Chicago are the smash hits in Malaysia. American programs are usually broadcast in English, without subtitles. Almost no one in the village understands English. But they grasp the import of gestures and the action sequences. But the plots puzzle them.

Not wanting to feel shut out, the Malaysians make up their own plots, trying to match the action to their highly original story lines. The pleasures of viewing are enhanced if there is an English speaking person present to translate the plot.

In June, 1976, a small item in the New York *Times* reported a new edict by the Malaysian government ordering all foreign films to carry subtitles in Malaysian. It is unclear whether this rule has been enforced on television.

The link between television and violent behavior has occasionally been noted in Malaysia. One evening a group of adolescent boys became so excited that their 20 year old hostess ordered them to leave. Next day

www.americanradiohistory.com

when she returned home she found that the short stairway outside her house had been torn away and tossed into a ditch.

The coming of TV to Trengganu has brought a new kind of hierarchy, not to say snobbery. A TV set in the house bestows prestige. It also permits the owner to play an important social role—inviting friends over for the evening. In the culture of Malaysia these are significant developments.

Another change concerns time. Before TV villagers never cared what time it was. School children and workers knew they had to rise early and turn up where they were expected. Otherwise people were guided by the sun overhead and the way they felt at the moment. But now the village knows what time the newest film from Egypt comes on, what time *Kojak* will appear and how long the evening's entertainment will last.

Finally, as elsewhere, TV has brought the world into primitive villages. People in Malaysia are seeing their national leaders for the first time. They see their capital city, they learn about the country's problems.

It's an easy generalization, but true. After television arrives, anywhere on the globe, life is never the same again. Manners, morals, ways of thinking undergo change. A world never dreamed of is set before people who may never have travelled more than 50 miles from home.

What will be the long range effect, an anthropologist wonders, of this exposure upon the innocent, simple people of the world?

Dr. Heather Strange is Associate Professor of Anthropology at University College, Rutgers, New Jersey. She has done field research in rural West Malaysia during two periods: 1965–66 (pre-television) under a Fulbright Fellowship, and again in 1975 under a grant from the Faculty Academic Study Program of Rutgers.

www.americanradiohistory.com

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"The NBC program, 'Saturday Night', perhaps best typifies the new movement in humor. . . . When I tune in the program I feel as though I have surrendered myself to a gang of rich white (and one black) kids, who wrestle me out of my home and throw me into the back seat of a brand new car that one of their daddies has bought them.

"We cruise around town for 90 minutes squashing furry puppies, the children, the old, the infirm. Anyone who lacks the savvy to get out of the way of this brash new machine called 'late '70's consciousness' is fair game. I laugh. Sure, I laugh. Their barbs are deadly accurate. They know their subjects well and they pursue them with a blood lust. Why, then, do I feel slightly unclean after watching 'Saturday Night'? And why, once the stunning effect has dissipated, do I feel let down, guilty, depressed at having enjoyed the shallowness of the humor?"

—Richard Whelan
Sunday Arts Section
New York Times.

★ ★ ★

"Just as the lungs of a chain smoker are demonstrably different from a nonsmoker's lungs, is it not possible that the brain of a 12-year old who has spent ten thousand hours in a darkened room watching moving images on a small screen will be different from the brain of a child who has watched little or no television?"

—The Plug-In Drug
By Marie Winn
(Viking Press)

www.americanradiohistory.com

New York
Universal City
Cleveland
St. Louis
Chicago
Atlanta
Dallas

www.americanradiohistory.com

Attack of the Giant Screen

By RICHARD LOUV

Electronic philosopher Marshall McLuhan was widely quoted as saying, "Television reintegrates the human senses, thereby making books obsolete." TV critic Michael J. Arlen had something to say about that: "Oh, boy, some life of the senses is my thought for the week, with Brother and Sis upstairs in the kids' communication room watching 'Uncle Don's Visit to the Fulton Fish Market,' which they can't smell, and Mom and Dad curled up on Acrilan grass in Dad's windowless information center, holding hands and watching a 24-hour weather program."

When McLuhan and Arlen were making those statements in the '60s, they hadn't seen anything yet. They hadn't seen what would soon be hatching in bars and restaurants and, most importantly, in growing numbers of private homes: the Mutated Muntzes, the Monster Sonys, the Abominable Advents, with eyes as big as the movies.

Like it or not, big-screen television is here. It's been incubating silently while everybody was watching Jerry and Jimmy and worrying about the recession. The whole economic stupor of the '70s had managed to force families to entertain themselves at home. And a few of these families found themselves gathered around these giant screens that snapped, crackled and popped louder and with more hot emotion than any of the cool little boxes had before.

Mae West once said the reason she never appeared on television was she didn't want to appear smaller than life. Well, up on that giant screen, Mae West comes looming out, hot, bawdy and commanding. We can't escape her, just as we can't escape the big screen.

★ ★ ★

The technology has been around for quite a while for what some psychologists call "the ultimate idiot box." Large-screen color television was available on an experimental basis in 1929. During the following decades, the big screens were available only for commercial purposes and sold for as much as $44,000. During the late '50s, a black-and-white big screen was available to consumers for only $29,999 and was a minor fad among the wealthy. But not until the last couple of years has the price been anywhere near the range of many private individuals. Now the estimated 30,000 big screens in the United States are creating group television viewing not unlike the early days of the little screen.

www.americanradiohistory.com

The big screens function basically in two ways: reflection or projection. They range in size from about four to seven feet diagonally, and in price, from $895 to $5,000. The best and most expensive big screen for the home is offered by Advent. The Advent 1000 has a projection unit separate from the seven-foot-diagonal screen. For the price of a first or second car, we can buy an Advent 1000—for $3,995.

Since the projection unit runs on the same amount of energy as a regular color television, there is relatively little danger from radiation. In addition to light, sound is projected onto the curved screen and is bounced back at the viewer.

The whole contraption takes up about as much space as a Ping-Pong table, but apparently that's too big for a lot of big-screen consumers; the new Advent 750 has a six-foot-diagonal screen and sells for only $2,495. The advantage it has over the bigger model is that the projection unit sits closer to the screen and looks more like a piece of walnut-veneer furniture. It also has remote control. This particular model is starting to outsell the Advent 1000 and is geared specifically toward the home market.

The Advent 750's chief competitor is the popular Sony KP400, which sells for $2,500 with remote control. The screen is smaller, though—only 40 inches diagonally—and is not so bright. The Sony's best feature is that it's one unit and doesn't dominate the room the way the Advent does.

At the other end of the spectrum is the Muntz self-contained unit, which has an inferior picture to both the Sony and the Advent but sells for considerably less: $1,395 for a 30-by-40-inch screen and remote control. Muntz also sells an $895 two-piece projection set, which San Diego Muntz dealer Clifford Webb says is a "waste of money." Basically, it's just an enlargement system for a regular-size television, which must be bought separately.

Webb estimates that 60 percent of his sales have been to restaurants and bars and 40 percent to private homes. Sales to private homes are taking a dramatic upturn, according to Webb, and what surprises him most is that the units have been as popular with low- or middle-income customers as with wealthy customers. The phenomenon is being reported by dealers of all the big-screen brands wherever markets are being tested, especially in the South and southwestern United States.

"They buy it on time just like a second car," says Webb. "It's incredible. I don't understand it."

Joe Gordon, a cook, is one of the customers who bought a Muntz on credit from Webb. Gordon, who lives alone, has had his giant screen for nine months, and the novelty still hasn't worn off. He watches it from 3:30 in the afternoon to 11:00 every night. "I turn the lights on to read sometimes and the picture is still fine," he says. "I never did go to that many movies. Outside of work, it's pretty much my life. I got nothing better to do."

www.americanradiohistory.com

Larry Norris, a salesperson, says his family has been rather hypnotized by the Muntz he bought several months ago. Like Gordon, he reports that the novelty hasn't yet worn off. "It's like being at the movies," he says. "It's easier to concentrate on the programs. I notice my kids are more interested in some of the educational programs than they were before. The screen just knocks their socks off. We're more a part of what we're watching, more involved. And I've definitely noticed that we have much higher emotional peaks when we're watching it."

Norris says that his family watches television a minimum of six to eight hours a day, and as high as 10 hours a day on weekends. He says the time his family spends watching TV hasn't increased, but the intensity with which they watch the screen has.

Even though the family has four other regular-size color TV sets in the house, the smaller sets are rarely turned on. Norris thinks the big screens are going to be accepted more and more by middle-income families like his. "Especially," Norris predicts, "when the economic problems we're having now end, and the price of the units goes down. I think they're really going to take off. My brother's thinking about getting one now."

Dr. Martin Krell of La Jolla, California, claims he bought one of the original Advent screens available to the general consumer. "I read about it in a '74 issue of *Playboy*," he explains. "I'd read about Henry Kloss, the genius behind Advent, the guy who also developed the famous KLH high fidelity speakers; so I called him in Cambridge, Massachusetts."

Krell's Advent 1000 arrived in time for a house-warming party, and he and his wife haven't paid much attention to regular-size televisions since. Krell recently traded in his 1000 for a self-contained model 750 and says the smaller unit is bound to find a big market. "It's like going to the movies instead of watching a little idiot box," he says. "The violence is more involving, that's for sure. The other day I was watching a football game, and you could have sworn the guys were puddling around in the living room."

When Krell watches the news on the big screen, he has absolute spasms. "I love Trisha Toyota, the newscaster in L.A. When they move in for the closeups of her skin . . . oh! Last night they had closeups of Olivia Newton-John's face fading in through the mist, and you should have seen her skin!"

★ ★ ★

Questions arise. Is there an antidote to these machines? Will the novelty wear off? How will they affect programming, and more importantly, how will they affect the programmed? Is Dr. Krell shuttled into true nirvana by the magnified pores on Trisha Toyota's nose, or is he merely a dermatologist?

Although McLuhan was unavailable for comment on the big screen, his administrative aide George Thompson says, "Any time the technol-

www.americanradiohistory.com

ogy of a medium is changed, it becomes another art form, creating its own references to the enviroment." Thompson says the bigger the screen the hotter, as gauged by McLuhan's hot and cool theories. "A 'hot' medium, like television, demands very little energy or involvement from the viewer, thus 'cooling' him off. Of course, there is a point of no return. A screen could be so large that it consumes the viewer. The viewer would no longer be aware of the screen because it has *become* the environment."

George Gerbner, Ph.D., dean of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications and the leading national expert on TV violence, gives little credence to the hot and cool theories and disagrees that the size of the screen changes the nature of the medium. "The aspect ratio—that is, the ratio of the angle of vision between the eye and the screen, depends on the distance from the screen. So, from a physical sense, the distance from the screen matters more than the size."

Gerbner says television is more like a religion than a communication medium. "It is nonselective, a ritual, part of the environment, like the air. You can't pick and choose the air you breathe. With the giant screens, TV will become even more like the air."

According to Gerbner, "The clarity of the actual physical elements are not important. What is important is the way the screen relates to the environment." If, instead of being one of many events happening in a room, TV becomes the happening—wall-size—then new reactions occur, whether or not the essential nature of the medium—hot, cold or lukewarm—has changed.

"What effect this will have on our conception of reality will be known only when we've had the opportunity to study its conduct," says Gerbner.

One of the more curious aspects of this burgeoning phenomenon is that big-screen television's effect on the viewer has yet to be studied. Gerbner expects serious studies to be conducted only after it has become a national phenomenon, a statement one critic likens to waiting until artificial sweeteners are in all the diet soft drinks before testing them for their cancer-causing capabilities.

Dr. David Pearl, chief of the Behavioral Science Research Branch of the National Institute of Mental Health, has been given the lead role with HEW to go beyond the surgeon general's report on the relationship between behavior and television, including violence and the entire range of mental health problems. He says he is not familiar with the large screens, and that he knows of no studies that have been or are now being conducted on how big screens could affect human behavior.

"There aren't that many scientists with support capabilities," Pearl says, "and finding representative samples of viewers makes it difficult to separate mediating effects. Without a large sampling of viewers, any conclusion could be dangerous; a small sample might give vastly wrong conclusions. There would certainly be an advantage in beginning to study

www.americanradiohistory.com

the screen now, though, so that when and if it becomes a national phenomenon, we'll have some knowledge about it."

Although some scientists have insisted there is virtually no difference between the large and small screens, Pearl speculates that the intensity brought to a big screen may just magnify the problems already attributed to television, such as the frightening control advertisers have learned to exert over children.

Psychologist Kenneth O'Bryan of the University of Toronto is convinced that it's not the content of the commercial that makes a child react, but rather the method by which it is presented. O'Bryan suggests that a good commercial is something like a Greek drama, which moves subjects to and from "periods of high arousal," much like those Larry Norris says are magnified for his children by the big screen.

According to Don Wyle, professor of telecommunication and film at California State University at San Diego, there is speculation among the academics that the excellent qualities of such shows as "Sesame Street" may be offset by the damage of all the peak-and-valley manipulation. "A child may grow up expecting things to happen to him in a stimulating fashion, instead of having to go out and create stimulation. Later, as an adult, he may have a tough time having calm, reflective hours. As screens get bigger, there will be more effective manipulation, more violence, and children will feel much more involved in the whole spectacle."

A. C. Nielsen has found that children under five watch an average of 23.5 hours of TV each week. By the time they graduate from high school, they will each have watched at least 15,000 hours of TV, more time than they will have spent at any other activity except sleep. (During the same years, they will be in school only 10,800 hours.) They will have viewed 18,000 murders and 35,000 commercials. And as adults, they will graduate to a saturating 44 hours of video each average week.

So the specter of all of this pure, grinding power made bigger and more in command is something to ponder the next time we're not watching TV. (McLuhan recently did an about-face and wrote off the whole TV generation. Quoted in *Mother Jones*, he says, "The generation that crawled out of the woodwork . . . affords little possibility of communication. They are a group of semi-illiterates in our Jules Verne period of outdated science fiction." So much for reintegrating the human senses.)

But along with the dark possibilities of big-screen television come more hopeful signals. The screens may prove valuable in the classroom. Bill Owen, television systems engineer for the Department of Instructional Media at Stanford Medical School, says the big screens should start replacing multiple classroom monitors.

"Our informal observations," states Owen, "showed that the large screens focused students' attention on one point in the room, which caused less side discussion, fewer distractions and more involvement." (Bell Telephone, though, found the large screen created problems during

www.americanradiohistory.com

conference calls when a participant talked directly to an image on the screen. People were uncomfortable talking to someone bigger than they are.)

Henry Kloss, the father of consumer big screens, can barely control either his enthusiasm (which seems more sincere than sales-oriented) or his frustration that the screen isn't having the effect on programming that he had hoped it would.

"I first assembled the device, adapted by Advent, from existing technology for my own private use. I wanted to get more out of TV, and as we started to market it to the general public, I hoped that the television producers, seeing their shows on the big screens, would recognize the theatrical possibilities of the medium."

The producers and businesspersons of television have ignored the screen, but Kloss claims actors, writers and directors have seen the potential to bring some heat to a cool medium.

One network executive who hasn't ignored the potential of big screens is Hartford Gunn, vice-chairperson of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). He thinks the big screens will catch on among consumers, and that programming changes will follow.

While George Gerbner says large screens will not change the medium ("a visual medium is molded more by editing, camera movements and optical techniques than by size, which doesn't matter visually"), Gunn predicts a cause and effect will change the visuals.

"Big-screen television *will* change the medium," insists Gunn, "precisely because it will give us an unavoidable opportunity to change our uses of editing and camera work, and I'm excited about that."

Gunn predicts that 10 years after the cost falls below $1,000, a fourth to a third of the viewing audience will own a giant screen; at that point, programming will change to fit the screen, just as set designers finally became serious about color when a quarter of the audience had purchased color sets.

No matter how much the artists of television want to use the theatrical capabilities of the big screen, assuming those capabilities exist, Gerbner says the desire is illusory. "Television is an advertising medium, not a theatrical medium," he points out. "The basic formula for programming is cost per thousand viewers. Cheaper programming makes more money, so there is no incentive to improve programming."

But Gunn says PBS would broadcast more live events, more sports, more stage productions and more pageants, because the larger the screen the greater ability the viewer has to see detail.

"In one scene of a recent opera we broadcast," he says, "there were perhaps a hundred actors on the stage. We had to show this scene in cameo sequences and, consequently, missed the magnificence of the scene. Especially with theater presentations, the video director has to make substantial compromises in the way he photographs for a small

www.americanradiohistory.com

scene; he has to confine himself to a relatively small segment of the stage. He has to make certain editorial decisions for the TV audience, and, by definition, he must exclude large portions of the action that the stage director has provided."

Gunn believes large screens will make viewers less conscious of the framing of the picture, and thus more able to pick and choose the detail on which they want to focus. "It's analogous," he asserts, "to comparing a standard 35-mm movie to a 70-mm film on a good projection system in a properly equipped theater; the feeling is that you are part of the action, rather than peering at it through a small hole."

Gunn hopes that a PBS-developed system for transmitting high fidelity stereophonic sound will become commercially available at the same time.

"And if, when the giant screens become popular, we have not yet come to a decision in our national debate about TV violence," Gunn prophesies, "we will surely make a decision quickly, because the violence will be so expanded that we will not be able to ignore it any longer."

If the big screen catches on, Henry Kloss believes the most dramatic change will occur among those people who seldom watch television. "There's a lot of intellectuals here in Cambridge who, as a matter of pride, never watch TV," he states. "They're the ones who will be most shocked by how much potential this medium really has. They'll find themselves watching television more and more.

"By the time the price is lower and the screens are available to more people," Kloss continues, "the technology will be offering more choices, like wider use of video games, videotape players and video camera for home 'movies.' By that time, a whole range of possibilities and choices will be available. Viewers won't be shackled to what the networks dish out. The big screens will encourage us to treat television more seriously, like theater. What worries me is that the businessmen and producers won't, and the amount of lousy programming now on the air will still exist. I came late to television. I never used to watch it. I was sickened by the kind of programs we're subjected to, and I hate to see those blown up and made more intense by the big screen. I'm no longer very hopeful that there will be less junk on TV; we'll just have more choices, we'll be more in control of our own home systems."

Kloss always thought that low- and middle-income people would take to the big screens—after all, he asks, who buys power boats and campers? But the banks didn't share his enthusiasm, and Advent has gone through some hard times. Sales of the 750 model, though, are showing that giant screens may yet be a popular consumer item. Kloss, who has given up his post as president of Advent, says the company is going to come out with a lower-priced screen in the next few years that will cost around $1,000 and will be as bright as the 750, albeit slightly smaller.

www.americanradiohistory.com

Other brands are also on the way. Admiral and Gulf & Western will produce giant screens soon. Sony is expected to improve their screen. And Advent is only now beginning to get its marketing organization focused on the general consumer.

So sometime in the next few years, we may be gasping at the clarity of Archie Bunker's giant nose hairs or succumbing to the seduction of Mae West as she steps out of the eye as big as the movies and into our living rooms, all hot and full of hypnotic power.

On the other hand, the whole phenomenon could be a flash in the tube. But not likely.

The foregoing article is reprinted, with special permission, from Human Behavior Magazine, July 1977. (© copyright, 1977)

Richard Louv grew up in Shawnee Mission, Kansas. He earned his BS in journalism from the University of Kansas. He currently shares a house in San Diego with a black and white portable television set.

Meredith Television

tv5

KCMO-TV Kansas City KPHO-TV Phoenix

WTVH Syracuse WNEM-TV Bay City-Saginaw-Flint

www.americanradiohistory.com

Dedicated to quality programming for 26 years.

www.americanradiohistory.com

On Using the Media Wisely

By ROBERT MACNEIL

The only things Americans do more than watch television is work and sleep.

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

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

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

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

Our preoccupation will increasingly be not how much money we make relative to other peoples, but how satisfying, how fulfilling to the human spirit is the life we can live with that money. And not just ourselves, but our neighbors and our fellow countrymen.

www.americanradiohistory.com

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

www.americanradiohistory.com

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

The foregoing essay is excerpted from the Commencement Address delivered by Mr. MacNeil at William Patterson College of New Jersey in May, 1977.

Born in Montreal. Robert MacNeil received his B.A. degree from Carleton University in Canada. In his long career as a newsman, he has worked for Reuters, CBS and NBC. He is currently with Public Broadcasting as co-anchorman, with Jim Lehrer on the nightly MacNeil-Lehrer Report.

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"Now, all over the world, television news is a curious animal. Merely because of their visual appeal, certain events receive more attention on the tube than they would in print. A fire, for example, that a newspaper might consider barely worth a paragraph, will receive an enthusiastic three-minute report on television.

"Then there is the strange phenomenon of the American weatherman. If anyone thinks the British are obsessed with weather, they should consider the Americans. The weather is constantly being given, and at length. In the late news broadcasts something like a sixth of the program is devoted to a discussion of weather past, weather present and weather future.

"The meteorologists providing this—I must say—largely erroneous information are all characters. They are funny. They make jokes. They are kidded by the other anchormen, and they josh the other reporters. So you can have up to a sixth of your news program devoted to a quirky account of weather conditions. It is as if a 24-page newspaper gave over four pages to weather reports. Hardly makes sense, does it? But it does make ratings. And ratings are what makes the world go round."

—*Clive Barnes*
in Punch

www.americanradiohistory.com

WCBS-TV New York
KNXT Los Angeles
WBBM-TV Chicago
WCAU-TV Philadelphia
KMOX-TV St. Louis

THE FIVE CBS STATIONS

www.americanradiohistory.com

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"*We* are the ones responsible for what appears in our living rooms. No one is stopping us from pushing the off button. Whereas the music from the transistor radio in a public park, the marquee of a porno theatre or the advertising on top of a bus is imposed on us—we can't turn them off.

—Nicholas A. Osgan
Letter to the New York Times

★ ★ ★

"What we have to ask is this: Is television just another medium? I think it isn't. People are born into a television room. They absorb it before they can speak, let alone read. They use it nonelectively. It has become a collective responsibility. It should be handled, not as books and films are handled, but as religion is handled."

—Dr. George Gebner
Quoted in New York Magazine

★ ★ ★

"In the face of our rising medical bills, rising rates of nutrition-related diseases, rising food prices, and rising concern over how to change well-established eating patterns, it simply makes no sense to permit the kind of dietary exploitation of our children that occurs on the tube."

— Dr. Joan Gussow
Quoted in ACT News

★ ★ ★

"The three networks combined have lost nothing in gross revenues by reducing the amount of advertising on children's programs."

—Television Advertising and Children
By Dr. Alan Pearce
U.S. House Subcommittee on Communications

www.americanradiohistory.com

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"I would like to acquaint you with another study. . . . rife with implications. Conducted by Per Diem, Inc., a small Washington consulting firm, this study is concerned with 'Heartwarming Moments on Commercial Television,' a Heartwarming Moment before defined as a soft embrace, a gesture of charity, or simply a good cry.

"During a single week of prime time, Per Diem's task force from Prince George County Community College came across 41,356 HWMs on the combined three networks, or approximately 2000 times the number of crimes. . . .

"One program, *Roots* on ABC set the record with 519 HWMs per half hour (closely trailed by *The Waltons* on CBS with 508) though it ought to be acknowledged that the researchers lost count once or twice during scenes of mass hugging and crying.

"All told, the team concluded that the men, women and children who people the airwaves, while sometimes given to fits of violence, cruelty and even outright criminality, are also (by and large) more generous, more tenderhearted and more solicitous of the welfare of others than the average real-life American.

"These findings, as it happens, accord with my own thinking . . . The live theatre, after all, has long been enamoured of violent subject matter. Were the Bacchae any less brutal than *Charley's Angels*? Was Titus Andronicus less sadistic than *Starsky and Hutch*? Of course not."

—*James Lardner in* The New Republic

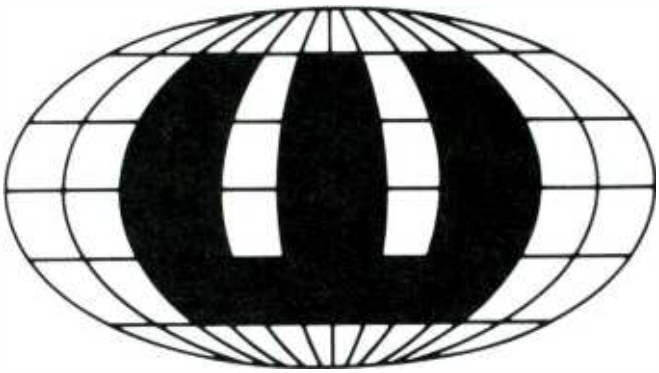
QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"It is amazing how it is taken absolutely for granted in most parts of the world that majority programs are for the majority of people, the ordinary people, the mass, while minority programs are for those who are so special that they need rather superior fare, like opera or Aeschylus, all the time. On the one hand, it's entertainment for the masses and, on the other, it's high tone for the cultured.

"In this country, and this is of the utmost importance—minority does not mean highbrow. And majority does not mean tripe. It means more than a minority. Minority simply means minority. People from Newcastle upon Tyne are a minority. And so are audiences for snooker, gardening or Shakespeare. And British television, like our political life, is based foursquare on this proposition: that we all of us belong to majorities and to minorities. What is more, they all overlap and they are all important."

—*Huw Weldon*
The Richard Dimbley Lecture, 1976
Published by the BBC

www.americanradiohistory.com



WORLDVISION
ENTERPRISES INC.

The World's Leading Distributor for Independent Television Producers

New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Atlanta, London, Paris, Tokyo, Sydney, Toronto, Rio de Janeiro, Mexico City, Munich, Rome

www.americanradiohistory.com

Adding new dimensions to tv programming.

WOR-TV New York
KHJ-TV Los Angeles
WNAC-TV Boston
WHBQ-TV Memphis

RKO TELEVISION
DIVISION OF RKO GENERAL, INC.

www.americanradiohistory.com

THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF TELEVISION ARTS AND SCIENCES

A NON-PROFIT ASSOCIATION DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF TELEVISION

OFFICERS

Richard R. Rector
Chairman of the Board

John Cannon
President

Jules Power
Vice Chairman

Don McCune
Senior Vice President

Don Elliot Heald
Vice President, Atlanta

Robert Bennett
Vice President, Boston/New England

Jim Ruddle
Vice President, Chicago

Jack Moffitt
Vice President, Cleveland

Edwin Eakins
Vice President, Col./Day./Cinn.

John Schimpf
Vice President, Detroit

Robert Behrens
Vice President, Miami

Joseph P. Zesbaugh
Vice President, Phoenix

Ellen Wallach
Vice President, St. Louis

Ralph M. Hodges
Vice President, San Diego

Don McCune
Vice President, Seattle

Robert Adams
Vice President, Washington

Frank Kavanaugh
Secretary

Ralph Hodges
Treasurer

Board of Trustees

ROBERT ADAMS
NICK ARONSON
ROBERT BEHRENS
IRA CIRKER
MICHAEL COLLYER
EDWAIN EAKINS
CRAIG FISHER
MARTHA GREENHOUSE
DON ELLIOT HEALD
RALPH HODGES
ANN LORING
DON McCUNE
JACK MOFFITT
DAN O'BRIEN
ALFRED PLANT
LEE POLK
MILES O'BRIEN RILEY
JOHN ROCHFORD
JIM RUDDLE
DICK SCHNEIDER
CHRISTINE SPENCER
ELLEN WALLACH
JOE ZESBAUGH

THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL
OFFICERS

President and Chief Executive Officer: Robert T. Howard
Chairman: Renato M. Pachetti
Vice Chairman: Ralph C. Franklin
Treasurer: Kevin O'Sullivan
Secretary: George Movshon

Board of Directors

Ralph M. Baruch
U.S.A.
Ed Bleier
U.S.A.
John Cannon
U.S.A.
James Duffy
U.S.A.
Irwin Sonny Fox
U.S.A.
Ralph C. Franklin
U.S.A.
Bruce Gordon
U.S.A.
Lawrence Grossman
U.S.A.
Karl Honeystein
U.S.A.
Robert Howard
U.S.A.
Oscar Katz
U.S.A.
Robert F. Lewine
U.S.A.
Elmer Lower
U.S.A.
Dorothy McCullum
U.S.A.
Kevin O'Sullivan
U.S.A.
Richard A. R. Pinkham
U.S.A.
Jules Power
U.S.A.
Frank Price
U.S.A.
Richard Rector
U.S.A.
Alan Silverbach
U.S.A.
Mort Werner
U.S.A.
Genichi Akatani
U.N.
Emilio Azcarraga
Mexico
Walter Clark Bueno
Brazil
Vittorio Boni
Italy
Maurice Cazeneuve
France
Murray Chercover
Canada
Talbot S. Duckmanton
Australia
Edouard Haas
Switzerland
Tadamasa Hashimoto
Japan
Junzo Imamichi
Japan
Dieter Stolte
Germany
Dr. Kambiz Mahmoudi
Iran
Howard Thomas
Great Britain
Hakan Unsgaard
Sweden
Huw Wheldon
Great Britain

Honorary Trustees

Former Presidents
Ed Sullivan
Harry S. Ackerman
Walter Cronkite
Robert F. Lewine
Mort Werner
Rod Serling
Royal E. Blakeman
Seymour Berns
Irwin Sonny Fox
Thomas W. Sarnoff
John Cannon

www.americanradiohistory.com

www.americanradiohistory.com

www.americanradiohistory.com

www.americanradiohistory.com

www.americanradiohistory.com

T.V. Quarterly
110 West 57th. Street
New York, New York
10019

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 1343
Bev. Hills
Calif.

04-6400 MONTY
EVA
7938 DRISCOLL AVE
WEST VAN NUYS CALIFORNIA 91406

www.americanradiohistory.com