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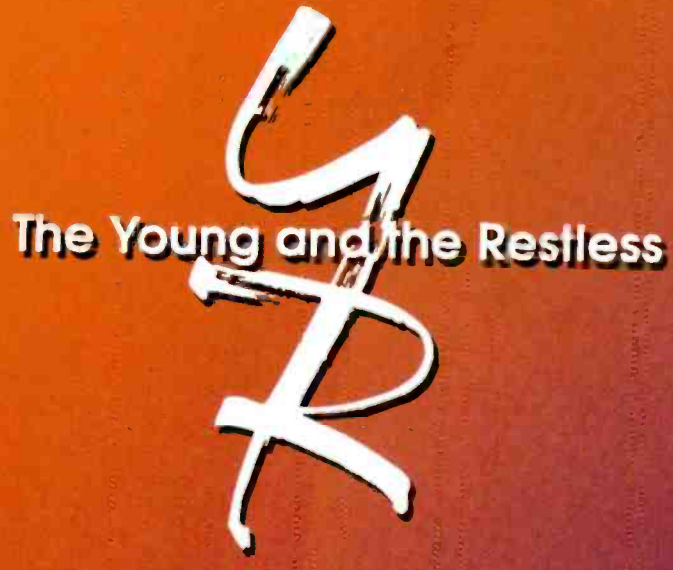

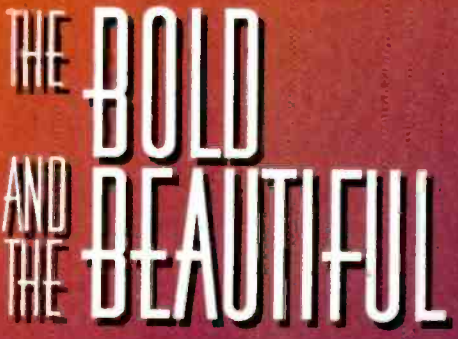

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TELEVISION QUARTERLY

THE JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF TELEVISION ARTS AND SCIENCES

FRANK STANTON: BORN TO INDISPENSABILITY

A broadcasting legend in his own time, 86-year-old Frank Stanton, reminisces with *Television Quarterly's* special correspondent about the early years with William Paley at CBS. But he still has plenty to say about current and future trends.

BY ARTHUR UNGER

A distinguished looking, graying man followed by a younger woman with a Welsh Corgi on a leash, preceded me to the mausoleum-like entrance of the Museum of Television and Radio, next door to the famous "21" on West 52nd Street. As I passed him, I recognized Dr. Frank Stanton, the man I was hurrying to interview in his office above the Museum.

"Dr. Stanton, I presume." I said.

He looked startled for a moment so I explained who I was. Actually we had met seven years before when I interviewed him for a series on the future of TV news which I was writing for the *Christian Science Monitor*. He remembered that and said he had enjoyed the interview and was looking forward to another chat for *Television Quarterly*.

He introduced me to his secretary Winifred Williams and his dog Fox-O. "I actually live up on 92nd Street," he explained, "but I keep an apartment close by the office."

When we entered the office, which he has occupied for more than a year, I was startled to discover that it looked like most of the unpacking was still to be done.

He settled himself carefully behind a two-inch-thick granite table, explaining that his eyesight was going. The dog, which had been rele-

Dr. Stanton with First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton at the Business Enterprise Trust Award Ceremony.

gated to his secretary's office, began yipping and, leash trailing, ran into the room, positioning himself within reach of Dr. Stanton, who petted him lovingly. "He is a great comfort to me," Dr. Stanton explained, "especially since I have been alone." Mrs. Stanton, his wife of 60 years, had died recently.

We looked around the room and he explained that the large series of "maquettes" on the wall were sketches done for enormous paintings in the lobbies of banks in Texas. Leaning on the wall behind the desk was a bold colorful abstract painting. "Who did it? He's my friend but I can't read the signature. I have several of them at the house."

"Soulages," it was decided.

Also on the shelf behind the desk was a CBS radio microphone which I later learned was the very mike that Edward R. Murrow had used to broadcast his wartime London reports.

A beautiful leather-bound set of the Madison Papers had been presented to Dr. Stanton, he explained, by the National Association of Broadcasters in the 1960s after he had quoted Madison in his testimony before several congressional committees in defense of his withholding of out-takes of *The Selling of The Pentagon*.

Leaning against them was a citation from the NAB which read: "For his leadership and his wisdom and his devotion to the objectives of the American democratic society; for his tenacity, boldness and courage in

furthering broadcasting's capacity to achieve those objectives; for his uncompromising rejection of encroachments on freedom and his determination to advance the greater public interest, the National Association of Broadcasters proudly pays tribute, unprecedented in our history, to our valued colleague, Frank Stanton."

In the corner was a tree, bound in protective tape, looking more like a wrapped modern sculpture by Christos than a growing plant.

Dr. Stanton apologized for the transitional state of his office. "These have been busy, disturbing days," he explained. "My wife died just at the time I was moving..."

Frank Stanton served as President of CBS for 26 years. He was a pioneer in behavioral science and much of his revolutionary method of measuring and analyzing radio and television audiences is still used today. He helped design and supervise the construction of the CBS headquarters, "Black Rock," and served as head of the arts committee of Lincoln Center. Many would say Dr. Stanton's greatest achievement, however, was his steadfast commitment to effective and independent broadcast journalism. Under his aegis, CBS aired the Murrow McCarthy *See It Now*, the controversial documentary *Selling of The Pentagon* which almost resulted in his jailing, and he managed to help CBS overcome the shadow of the quiz show scandals.

In the recent biography of William Paley, *In All His Glory* by Sally Bedell Smith, industry observers point out that there are almost as many references to Frank Stanton as there are to Bill Paley. And, unlike the case with Paley, most of Stanton's references tend to be complimentary.

A week after the interview I attended a breakfast of the Business Enterprise Trust at which Dr. Stanton was given a 1993 Business Enterprise Lifetime Achievement Award. The Trust was founded in 1989 by television producer Norman Lear along with leaders in American business, labor, the media and academia. The award:

"An industry statesman, champion of the First Amendment and influential patron of the arts, Frank Stanton has profoundly shaped the last half-century of American culture. A broadcast visionary renowned for his integrity, Stanton transformed CBS from an obscure chain of radio affiliates into a preeminent television network."

Dan Rather, in introducing Dr. Stanton at the breakfast, said: "Dr. Frank Stanton was one of the great rule-makers and standard setters. When we at CBS News talk about our 'standards' and how much they mean to us (and they do mean plenty), Dr. Frank Stanton stands out among the originators of those standards. He gave the network the tools we needed to build and to grow. And in the process he gave the American people important tools..."

After the award ceremony, Dr. Stanton came over to my table and leaned over to whisper in my ear: "I feel terrible because Dan Rather was so kind to me and I wonder if perhaps I was a bit harsh in my remarks about Dan during the interview. I don't want to add to his troubles. I know I shouldn't ask this, but could we soften it just a bit?"

I went back and listened to my interview tape. Dr. Stanton was not harsh at all, simply saying honestly that he thought Dan Rather was at his best as a correspondent.

There is one thing none of the citations pointed out but which I believe is perhaps the most important aspect in Dr. Frank Stanton's make-up and a major factor in his stunning accomplishments in an industry noted for its harsh competitiveness: he is a kindly, compassionate gentleman.

Following is the interview with Dr. Frank Stanton. There has been some tightening and reshuffling of chronology but all the answers are verbatim:

UNGER: *When you left CBS in 1973, CBS was regarded as the Tiffany network. Recently, you said that CBS has become just another big business with dirty carpets.*
STANTON: Well, that's an accurate quote. But it was some time ago.

UNGER: *How do you feel now about CBS?*
STANTON: Pretty much the same. It has certainly improved from the time I made that remark a few years ago, but as far as the character of the company is concerned I don't think it has changed that much. It has improved its nighttime rating, but it hasn't exerted the kind of leadership in the field of news and public affairs that it held for many, many years. The leadership that Dick Salant gave to the news division has been absent in the intervening years. I think the position that the leadership of CBS has taken vis-a-vis cable and other developments has left something to be desired.

ABC has moved into the #1 position in my book. It's much more forward-looking than CBS. NBC has slipped. I don't know how to explain what happened at NBC. But I certainly feel that CBS doesn't hold the same leadership position in the industry that it once held.

UNGER: *In an interview we did seven years ago, you had an interesting prediction: you said you believed that Peter Jennings might very well be the Walter Cronkite of the late 1980s and 1990s.*
STANTON: You mean, I said that seven years ago? I was right wasn't I? You know, one hesitates to criticize his own organization and I've refrained from saying things about CBS because it doesn't seem to me that it's a very decent thing to do. If there's any way I can avoid that in this interview, I'd appreciate it.

UNGER: *Let's talk more about you. According to my research, you went to Ohio Wesleyan and Ohio State where you majored in zoology and psychology. You got your Masters and Phd. in psychology, right?*
STANTON: That is correct.

UNGER: *And then starts the most interesting part to me. In preparing your PhD. thesis, you contacted CBS.*
STANTON: I was in contact with both NBC and CBS but CBS gave a more positive response than NBC, so I continued my correspondence and contact with the CBS people when I was a graduate student.

UNGER: *But you originally contacted them about a research project?*
STANTON: Yes, I was a curious sort of kid. Radio was just starting at the time. There was a very small ownership of receivers and I was curious about how the broadcaster knew anything about the people he was talking to, what their listening habits were, what their preferences for programs were. I didn't know how the networks or the stations got that information. And indeed, I quickly discovered that they were doing things pretty much by the seat of their pants and not with any real feeling for what the audience reaction was other than mail. So I embarked upon a research program to develop a recorder that would record when the set was on, and so forth.

UNGER: *That was the first "black box"?*
STANTON: Yes. That captured the attention of CBS when I disclosed to them what I was doing. They invited me to come over and talk with them about it. They even paid my expenses to come over, which was a very generous thing to do. As a young graduate student who had very little extra change, that was a big help. As soon as I finished my doctorate, I did a little more research in Ohio, using the recorder, jumped in my Model-A Ford

and came over to Manhattan and started to work for CBS. I got here on a Saturday and I started to work on the following Monday. That was October, 1935.

UNGER: *And you started in the research department?*
STANTON: Well, there wasn't any research department, really. There was another man there and a woman who kept some of the records and we made up the unit.

UNGER: *Since that time, of course, the networks have come to depend very much on research. Do you think that it is being misused now, that there is too much dependence on research?*
STANTON: I don't think it's being misused. I think that the use of the material—the use of the findings—has not been misused. I think the actions that have been taken based on the findings in some cases have been less than what I would have liked to have seen happen. But research should never be substituted for ingenuity and creativity.

UNGER: *In Sally Bedell Smith's book about William S. Paley—In All His Glory—you were mentioned almost as much as Bill Paley. The conflicts, the love/hate relationship that Paley seems to have had with you, resulted in you leaving at the age of 65 and him staying on until past 90. He offered you the job of CEO and then sort of withdrew the offer, according to legend. In retrospect now, do you think that Bill Paley would be happy with the myth of Bill Paley that exists or do you think he would be upset by the image that has been created in the public's mind?*
STANTON: Well, in the first place I was a very fortunate guy because, in effect, Bill turned over an enormous opportunity to me when he barely knew me. When he came back from WWII, we had a reception for him. During that reception, he said to me: "Are you going to be in the office tomorrow? Let's have lunch."

Then I found out later in the evening that what he meant by lunch was coming out to the country where he had lived and was returning. When I got out there, the house was full of old friends of his, some of whom I knew and most of whom I did not know. And after lunch— it was pouring down rain—he said, "Gee, I feel like a walk. Does anybody feel like taking a walk with me?" I thought that this was my cue. So I said, "Yes, I do." And he said, "Let's go down by the pool."

We sat under an umbrella with the rain pelting down on the umbrella and he said almost abruptly: "I want you to take over the company and become president of the company because I don't know what I'm going to do."

I said, "Well, what *are* you going to do?" He said, "I don't want to be pinned down. I'm not sure just what my plans are." I thought maybe he would go into government, that was what he had in his mind. I raised that question and he said, "No." He just didn't know what he was going to do and he didn't want to have any worries about the company: "Please take it over."

UNGER: *What year was this?*
STANTON: This was October, 1945.

UNGER: *So you had been in the company just ten years?*
STANTON: And indeed, it was the first time that I ever sat across the table one-on-one with Bill Paley. Maybe I'd been in small meetings with him half a dozen times, but he didn't know me and I didn't know him.

I said to Mr. Paley, "You don't know me. And I'd like to have a little time to think about it." The fact is, at that particular time, I was planning to take another job. As soon as the war was over, I had a program that I wanted to embark upon. So, I said, "Give me a little time to think about it and I'll get back to you." We walked back to the

house and as we were going into the house, he turned to me and said,"Well, then you'll take care of the announcement on Monday." And I said, "Gee, Mr. Paley, I thought I had a week..." "Oh, yes," he said, "think about it ..."

The week went by and I had come to the conclusion that I would stay with CBS. But I didn't see Mr. Paley again until Christmas Eve. All that time went by and I didn't know whether I was going to be president or whether I was going to go a different route. Well, what was happening was, he was getting a divorce. He had a lot of other interests just back from the war, so he wasn't much in the office. But on Christmas Eve, I ran into him.

I said I had been hoping to see him and he said, "Yes, I had expected to hear from you." To which I said that I was prepared to talk but he wasn't there. "Do you want to talk now?" He said, "Sure, let's talk right now." He said to the woman he was with: "Do you mind waiting here in the foyer? I'd like to talk to Frank." We went in and I said, "I assume that because you didn't get in touch with me or make yourself available to be talked with that you must have had second thoughts."

"Oh, no," he said, "quite to the contrary, I want to go right ahead." And I said, "Fine." There was no talk about salary. There was no talk about terms and conditions—none of the things that you get into these days about stock options and all of those things. We had a handshake, I said goodbye and I saw him again later that week and I worked out an announcement. There was a board meeting and I was elected president and that was that.

For the first ten years of the almost 30 years that I was chairman or that I was president, I had the operation almost solely to myself. Then television began to come into the picture and Paley became more interested in what was going on. So the next ten years I would say we worked closer together on the development of the company. The last ten years I was actively engaged in operating the company, but Paley and I were not that close. But retirement at 65 was my idea when I came in because we had no retirement plan. This was a kids' organization and I felt that we had to get our house in order on pensions and all the things you get as you grow in an organization. I had put in a plan of mandatory retirement at age 65.

UNGER: *How old were you yourself at this point?*
STANTON: Probably 50. I never thought I would live to be 65. But everybody knew that 65 was my date. That was my plan. About a year before Paley was 65, he said to me, "You know I'm going to be 65 shortly and what do you think I ought to do?" And I said that I thought he had a very special relationship with the company. "What do you want to do at age 65?" I asked. He was very forthright: "If I couldn't come into the building every day and feel that I was still the chairman, I don't know what I'd do."

I said, "That's the answer. It's not going to be a problem for me because I won't be here." I went on to retirement at age 65. There was no fanfare because I chose not to make any fuss about it. There was no retirement party.

UNGER: *Would you have liked to have that 65 age level waived for yourself?*
STANTON: No, sir. I took my own medicine.

UNGER: *How do you feel about mandatory retirement at 65 now?*
STANTON: I think that there are some jobs where you ought to retire at 55. I'm not sure that 65 is the right age for somebody in broadcasting, but certainly not older than that because, you know, your customer base is changing, the attitudes of the people

you're serving are shifting, you have to appeal to the younger people.

A lot of what is the programming for younger people didn't appeal to me even at age 60. And no, I think to be in tune with the people you're serving, 65 is just about right and maybe 60 would be better. With cable, interactive programming, and the development of new technology. I don't know how much the older management people are paying attention.

UNGER: *Do you think that CBS would have benefited if Paley had retired earlier?*
STANTON: Absolutely. No question about it. Biggest mistake he made for the company was that he hung on. He tied the hands of the one strong man he had. I don't want to identify him because there are five of them who went through the gate after I left. One of them would have been ideal for the job. Paley was set on becoming more active after I left. To be perfectly blunt about it—I think I spent so much time publicly and privately running CBS that for the first 20 years, people were beginning to think that there wasn't any Paley anymore. In fact, that conversation that I referred to when he was 64, he said, "My friends don't think I have anything to do around here anymore."

UNGER: *You think he resented that?*
STANTON: Oh, yes. No question about it. I think in the end, in the last year or so, he could hardly wait until I reached 65. He didn't push me; don't misunderstand me. There was no sign of that, but I think he was greatly relieved when my number came up.

UNGER: *But later on, after retirement, you had much contact with him.*
STANTON: Oh, for the first year or so, I was involved in Washington, out all over the world on Red Cross matters and so I wasn't here. But then after I finished my appointments as chairman of Red Cross, I dropped back into activities in the city. He was having trouble with some of the management changes that he made, and he asked me to come over and help him privately on what to do about this, and what to do about that. At the end, I guess we were closer than we'd ever been. It was really a love/hate relationship.

UNGER: *To go back to my original question though, do you think that Paley would be happy with the image that he's left behind?*
STANTON: No, because Bill wanted an image that was different from what the facts were in many ways. His personal life, I think, he would have preferred that Sally Bedell Smith and others didn't get into. I think he would have been hurt by the disclosures that came about in her book. He never read the book. I think he was told that it was a bad book from his point of view and so he avoided it.

UNGER: *How do you feel about the book? Do you think it was a fair picture?*
STANTON: I think it is one of the best things that has ever been written about anybody in the broadcasting industry.

UNGER: *She's working on another biography now.*
STANTON: She's doing a book on Pamela Harriman. And it's going to be a much more interesting book than the Paley book. [chuckle]

UNGER: *There are two programs that stand out as especially controversial in your career:* The Selling of the Pentagon *and the McCarthy* See It Now. *Both of those involved a great deal of press and controversy. Could we go over them?*

First of all Murrow's McCarthy See It Now. *The controversy there was not so much that Murrow did it, but that McCarthy was given an opportunity to respond to it. And the question was:*

should that have been? I think you were criticized at that point.
STANTON: Well, I stand pat about what we did on that. I think to do a job as Ed did on McCarthy on *See It Now* and not give McCarthy, or anyone else who was taken apart the way he took McCarthy apart, without an opportunity to explain himself would have been unfair from our point of view. And certainly unfair for the victim. I should say before I get into this—there were certain journalists at CBS who, when they went out on a story, were not given any close supervision on what they did. You learned from experience that they were seasoned, wise, fair, and so forth. So, *See It Now* operated almost as a third news division. Along about 4 o'clock on the afternoon of the broadcast, Ed called me and said that he had been trying to get hold of me and Bill Paley to see if we could have a little meeting before the end of the day. We had no idea of what was coming. Ed said, "We just thought we'd tell you that we're going to bite off a big problem tonight with McCarthy." Now this had been a subject that had been touched on before with Murrow, so it wasn't any news to us that he was following McCarthy.

UNGER: *The program turned out to be very partisan.*
STANTON: Oh, yes. It had editorial copy in it. When they finished showing it I guess it was Bill who said, "How do you plan to handle McCarthy on this as far as response is concerned?" And there was some hesitation on the part of producer Fred Friendly and Ed in their reply to the question. I think I joined in and said, "Well, we cannot take this position for a half hour and not give the opportunity for the other side to reply." I won't say that this was greeted by enthusiasm by Fred and Ed, but there was no resistance.

UNGER: *But wasn't that basically your policy at the time?*
STANTON: Absolutely. We had lived by that from the beginning. Would we have given Hitler the right to reply? Of course not. But this was within our own family, so to speak. We tried to be as fair as we could be on important issues. In fact, we had a very strong policy in our regular news of not having any views expressed by the journalists, but if there was an editorial point of view, that was to be expressed by management or by somebody designated by management.

The broadcast took place and you know what followed. The plan was to get in touch with the McCarthy people to reply. A formal invitation was dispatched to McCarthy and in public statements after the broadcast either I or somebody in news said that we were making time available for McCarthy. I would have preferred to have McCarthy on the following week. McCarthy said he couldn't get ready that soon.

It quickly developed that there would be at least a two-week delay between the original broadcast and the response. It was a rough period because we got all kinds of response both national and international during that period. We certainly had it from Washington. We had it from McCarthy supporters. We had it from McCarthy's enemies. But the time was ripe for what Ed did. If he had done it six months earlier, I don't think it would have had nearly the impact that it had just at the time he did it.

UNGER: *And also the fact that Eisenhower was not doing it maybe made it even more important.*
STANTON: People were getting impatient with the leadership not taking on McCarthy.

UNGER: *But the McCarthy response did go on. And I gather it did more harm for him.*
STANTON: Oh, it didn't help him a bit.

UNGER: *Did McCarthy submit a script?*
STANTON: Not at all. I didn't see any part of it before the broadcast.

UNGER: *Let's go back to Murrow. The same question I asked you about Paley: Do you think that the legend of Ed Murrow is justified now? What was the real value and importance of Ed Murrow to television? He has become almost a mythic character.*
STANTON: An icon, yes. Well, certainly he demonstrated the importance of international communications. Especially the radio broadcasts he did—*This is London*. In fact, that microphone behind me ... Have you got time for this?

UNGER: *Of course!*
STANTON: On my periodic visits to the bureaus, I tried to get out to the field every so often to show the flag, and so forth. On one of my visits to London, we were moving the office of the bureau or expanding the office, I believe. And as I was leaving one night, in a big can of trash, I saw this microphone. I said to Howard Smith, who was then running the bureau, "What about this mike?" I guess I said it for two reasons: one, because I was curious about the mike because it was an old-fashioned mike. And the other thing was that I was concerned about seeing any equipment being thrown out. [chuckle] He said, "Well, this is the mike that stood by during all the war years." And I said, "Is this the mike that was used by Ed?" "Oh, yes," he said, " 'This is London.' " And I said, "Well, we shouldn't throw this away."

I dismantled it, put it in my briefcase and brought it home. And I've given it to the Smithsonian. They are allowing me to keep it until I go. That's the mike that Ed used in those years.

UNGER: *We were talking about Ed Murrow—the reality versus the myth ...*
STANTON: He lifted radio broadcast journalism to new heights. Ed was an enormous figure in London at that time. He would walk into the Prime Minister's office almost whenever he wanted to. He had access every place. He was their lifeline to the United States.

UNGER: *How about Ed in television? Was he ever an important part of television other than* See It Now *and* Person to Person?
STANTON: No, he didn't do in television what he did in radio. In fact, Ed was never comfortable in television in the way he was with radio.

Eric Sevareid was probably the finest writer we ever had on staff but Eric wanted to talk to the microphone. All these guys giving signals and fooling with lights, and so forth, just drove him crazy. And Ed was a good bit the same, but not as bad as Eric. These were, if you will, radio men and they were used to working in a small studio and very intimate with the microphone. Television is not that kind of a format.

UNGER: *Was Ed ever offered the anchor job for CBS-TV news?*
STANTON: He was gone before that. He left in '60 or '61, and Doug Edwards was doing the TV news at that time for 15 minutes. Ed could have done it and Ed would have been welcome, but Ed had gone back doing the 15 minutes of radio at 7:45 p.m. I don't think he would have been that happy doing television. I took Ed to the Century Club one day for lunch and pressed him awful hard to think about doing something in television. This was before he made the switch from *Hear It Now* to *See It Now*. Indeed, at the '48 convention in Philadelphia, which was a radio convention although there were cameras down there, we did television. It was minuscule coverage, but at the end of the day we wanted Ed and Eric to come into the studio and talk a little bit about what had happened. Ed didn't want to do it on

television; he wanted to do it on *radio.*

UNGER: *You've said that Ed Murrow was really an educator.*
STANTON: That's how he came into CBS. He was head of "Talks." He was in London at the time of the war breakout. He was there not as an on-air journalist for CBS News, he was there arranging exchange talks. In those days in radio, we had periods where we had straight talk. And Ed was over there doing that when we pressed him into service on radio news.

UNGER: *Now, in the case of* The Selling of the Pentagon, *you ended up having to testify before a congressional committee.*
STANTON: I ended up almost going to jail.

UNGER: *You would not give up the out-takes ...*
STANTON: Absolutely. I would not surrender any of our inside documents on that broadcast. This was considered an attack on the Pentagon, and Armed Services stepped in to try and help the Pentagon. We had a request from the House Committee to submit the tape. I said, "Send it over to them," because I knew that the tape they wanted wasn't the tape we were going to give them. And, of course, they said, "No, this isn't what we want. We want all the tape that didn't get on the air."

I said, "Absolutely not." I was steadfast that this was not something we were going to do, and under the First Amendment, we were protected. Then two armed servants of the House of Representatives came into my office in uniform and gave me a subpoena.

It was ridiculous. Here were two guys dressed up in uniform serving a subpoena in New York when they could have taken it to my office in Washington and I would have accepted the subpoena or my office would have accepted it for me—because this wasn't the first time I'd been subpoenaed. I took the subpoena and we issued a statement that we would not comply. Everything hit the fan from that point on.

UNGER: *But you did testify?*
STANTON: Oh, I testified. There were three committees and I testified in front of all of them. I was voted in contempt by all three, and the issue went to the floor of the House for confirmation. In the end, after much turmoil and a lot of nervous moments, we prevailed 226 to 181—a substantial majority in support of me. But the morning after that vote was taken, I had breakfast with John Mitchell, who was then Attorney General. And the reason I had breakfast with John Mitchell wasn't because I was a friend of John Mitchell, but at that time I was chairman of the board of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Information—a five-man board.

John Mitchell met me at the elevator and smiled. He said, "I thought I was going to be seeing you under some different circumstances today." And he told me quite frankly that they were all set to railroad me into jail to make an example.

UNGER: *But Congress wouldn't allow it.*
STANTON: No.

UNGER: *So, this is all part of your general attitude towards Government's interference in television broadcasting. You are against the FCC equal time regulation?*
STANTON: Yes. Otherwise, we couldn't have had the debates. You know, if I had to take credit for anything in terms of when I was active, I would guess the First Amendment support I gave in connection with *The Selling of the Pentagon* and the fact that I had a hand in getting the equal-time thing lifted on an experimental one-time basis and that was in the campaign of 1960. Sure. That summer I tromped up and down the halls of Congress trying to get

votes in support of the resolution because it was terribly important to get that one test.

UNGER: *How do you feel about deregulation in general? Do you think deregulation has been working in the past few years? Or do you think there's a need for more regulation?*
STANTON: No, I'm very strong for deregulation. It has helped the affiliates.

UNGER: *And you don't feel that television news has changed?*
STANTON: Sure, it's changed. It changed very much, but that isn't due to deregulation. That's due to the management of the networks. The evening news is not as good as it used to be in large measure because there's been a different attitude about preserving the style and the standards we had 20 years ago.

UNGER: *I think you once said to me that it was not out of total altruism that CBS did quite a bit of solid news broadcasting. You felt that it was part of a well-rounded approach to what should be on television. In recent years, there's been much more of a bottom-line approach to television news, searching for profits rather than for balance. Do you think that is more the case now?*
STANTON: Yes.

UNGER: *Do you think that the intrusion of big business into network broadcasting has affected television news coverage?*
STANTON: Gee, I don't think it's big business. I think it's an attitude on the part of senior management. They're much more bottom-line oriented for two reasons. One, because we're in a tough economic cycle; and the second is because of the introduction of all of the competition coming through cable and through the proliferation of stations has made it tougher to compete. And there's been more pressure on the news division to turn in a profit.

UNGER: *When you were at CBS, you were very much involved in diversification and trying to get CBS to go into other areas.*
STANTON: Things having some relationship to broadcasting other than the Yankees.

UNGER: *And much of that diversification has been divested.*
STANTON: Yes.

UNGER: *Do you think it has been a mistake on the part of CBS, to get out of some of the things that they were in?*
STANTON: Well, they would have made a lot more money if they would have kept the record division. I'm on the Board of Sony Entertainment, which owns the old Columbia Records, and I see what they're doing in the way of the business today. And they could have done the same thing for CBS.

UNGER: *That was done under Tisch's rule, actually.*
STANTON: Yes.

UNGER: *How do you think Tisch has functioned as the head of CBS?*
STANTON: His style of management is entirely different than Paley's and mine.

UNGER: *How does it differ?*
STANTON: I think that Tisch is a very smart and very shrewd businessman. Look at the way the stock has behaved. The profits of the company have done very well. I can't fault him on his business management. He's not a broadcaster. He doesn't pretend to be a broadcaster. I'm old-fashioned. I still think that you ought to have a little printer's ink and a little experience in front of the microphone to know what goes on in broadcasting. But Tisch doesn't deserve any special mention in this connection because

the same thing has happened at NBC. The same thing is happening in cable. The same thing is happening in the ownership of almost all stations.

UNGER: *But I notice that you don't mention ABC. Is it because ABC is under the control of broadcasting people?*
STANTON: Absolutely. I had a hand in starting "Cap Cities" and I've been very close to Frank Smith who was the first man to head "Cap Cities" and I have been close to Tom Murphy. And I'm very positive about what they've done.

UNGER: *Here are some of the things that you advocated at various times in your career. You proposed a uniform 24-hour voting day across the United States.*
STANTON: Absolutely. And I still stand by that.

UNGER: *You also proposed that Congress and various committees be open to TV.*
STANTON: Well, that's happened.

UNGER: *Mostly on C-Span.*
STANTON: Well, okay, but it has happened.

UNGER: *How do you feel about C-Span?*
STANTON: Very positive.

UNGER: *You also wanted a world-wide exchange of programming by satellite. I guess that's happening on cable.*
STANTON: Oh, in a sense it's happening, but not to the extent that I thought it could. And it will happen. That's still to come. And why will it happen? Because you're going to have so much open time on cable that people will begin to look for more programming.

UNGER: *Are you sorry that CBS went in and out of cable?*
STANTON: Absolutely. That was a great mistake. CBS cable was ahead of its time, but that's no still excuse to get out.

UNGER: *Why did they pull out? It was such a good channel.*
STANTON: It was a good service. They could have been the CNN of today.

UNGER: *But they focussed on cultural programming.*
STANTON: Well, yes, but they could have segued into the news without any trouble.

UNGER: *At one point, it seems to me, that you tried to get together a UHF group to start some sort of a 24-hour UHF news service.*
STANTON: Remember, the FCC was encouraging people to get UHF licenses. This is before cable. And with the UHF station, it had to be a windy day before you could hear them outside of the city limits. And I thought there was an opportunity to have a 24-hour news service in broadcasting and do it on UHF. I went to the then chairman of the FCC and said, "If we put all of our UHFs in all news and started a UHF news network, would you support us for that kind of operation?" We had to get special permission from the FCC. The chairman thought it was an excellent idea and said, "Let me explore it informally with some of my colleagues." Within 24 hours, he called me and said, "It won't fly." And so, I didn't do anything about it.

UNGER: *Do you think CBS should have been in 24-hour news in some form, either cable or broadcast?*
STANTON: Oh, certainly. But it's too late now.

UNGER: *I think you proposed at one time that CBS buy CNN, which was then in the red.*
STANTON: Well, it was almost

going under. And Paley toyed with the idea, but in the meantime Turner got the idea that he wanted to take over CBS! [chuckle] And that sort of chilled the conversation. And strangely enough, both guys were right. Paley should have taken over the news, and maybe Turner should have taken over the entertainment side.

UNGER: *What do you think about all this talk about Bill Cosby or somebody else buying NBC News from NBC and making it a separate organization. Is it possible for a news division of a network to be operated by an outsider?*
STANTON: Sure. It would pose some neat regulatory questions, but there's no rule that prohibits it. In effect, if the FCC took us out on the entertainment business and turned that over to Hollywood, they could just as easily turn the news division over to another company.

UNGER: *Actually, Don Hewitt every now and then talks about taking over CBS News.*
STANTON: Well, Don has now got his dream fulfilled by going into cable shopping with Macy's.

UNGER: *How do you feel about the entrance of the telephone company into the broadcasting business and the impact of the shopping networks on television.*
STANTON: I'm all for it. Five hundred channels? Sure, certainly.

UNGER: *If you had freedom to set up a network news operation without regard to costs or anything else, what sort of news coverage would you have? Last time we talked you said that you'd keep the half-hour hard-news at 7 o'clock, but have a 10:30 p.m. news program which would cover the main topics in-depth and maybe with a personality involved. Do you still feel that way?*
STANTON: I would probably move it later than 10:30 because the night-time schedule has shifted more into late night for that kind of programming. If, for instance, Bob Dole today came up with a plan for the health program and it was an important news item at 6:30 or 7 o'clock, I'd have Bob Dole on at 10:30 or 11 o'clock for a full half-hour or an hour to talk about his proposal. In other words, I'd elaborate on the leading news item in that later period.

UNGER: *Isn't that more or less what Ted Koppel is doing?*
STANTON: Sure.

UNGER: *But you think it should have been done a long time ago.*
STANTON: I was talking about this long before Ted Koppel.

UNGER: *That's true. Now, about the entrance of the telephone companies into the broadcasting business.*
STANTON: No objection on my part. Technically, I think there are some problems, but that's not my concern. Cable, I think, can do it better than the telephone company as things stand today, but the telephone company has so much technical skill that they could adjust to what cable is doing. It's money. It's an enormous bill.

UNGER: *How do you feel about the amount of violence on TV and the threats of the Attorney General and some legislators that they will do something to reduce violence on TV?*
STANTON: Well, there certainly is too much violence on TV. . . but also in movies and cable. However, I certainly would not go the route suggested by Attorney General Reno.

I think that what the industry has to do is face up to the fact that it must show more leadership and responsibility. I can't believe that they aren't already planning something privately that they will announce soon. Government interference would be absolutely wrong. I don't want somebody in Washington telling broadcasters what should be put on air.

UNGER: *How about going through some names in television and having you react quickly.*
STANTON: Briefly, you mean.

UNGER: *Dan Rather.*
STANTON: A very strong correspondent, better in the field, as a journalist.

UNGER: *Connie Chung.*
STANTON: Charming, attractive, a good reader.

UNGER: *Peter Jennings.*
STANTON: Very thoughtful, first-class professional and the top man as far as anchors go.

UNGER: *Tom Brokaw.*
STANTON: Excellent as an anchor; a first-class journalist.

UNGER: *Bernard Shaw on CNN.*
STANTON: I haven't seen enough of him to give you a quick answer.

UNGER: *By the way, you once said that you had the same television-watching set-up at home that you had in your office: that is four sets so that you could switch back and forth. How is it that you have no television sets here in your office?*
STANTON: Because I have no vision. My eyes are gone. I see double and I can't read very well.

UNGER: *Do you listen to television?*
STANTON: Sure.

UNGER: *Going back to our names: Barbara Walters.*
STANTON: She's a very agreeable aggressive, highly-motivated journalist.

UNGER: *Diane Sawyer?*
STANTON: Absolutely the tops as far as the women are concerned.

UNGER: *Howard Stringer.*
STANTON: As an executive, I don't know him. He came after my time. I guess, he did a very good job in getting Letterman and some of the things that he's done.

UNGER: *Tom Murphy at ABC.*
STANTON: The leading management man in broadcasting today.

UNGER: *Bob Wright at NBC.*
STANTON: First-class businessman, excellent executive but not a broadcaster.

UNGER: *How about a short view of Tisch?*
STANTON: No.

UNGER: *Walter Cronkite?*
STANTON: He's the all-time champion. He's absolute tops.

UNGER: *Ted Turner?*
STANTON: Terrific visionary and a man of great action. He still hasn't gotten the recognition he deserves.

UNGER: *I'd like to do something that I've been doing on this series. I take quotes about the subject—some positive and some negative—and ask for reaction. Actually, this is very difficult with you because almost everything is positive.*
STANTON: You know that's not true.

UNGER: *Well, there are so few negatives. But let me give you the positive ones first. These are quotes: "the most successful college professor in the American business world." How does that strike you?*
STANTON: I was never a college professor.

UNGER: *Somebody thought of you as that. That was way back in 1945, I think.*
STANTON: Well, let's get the facts out. You know, I was a graduate student for 4 years and I taught 15 hours a week to help pay the bills, but I wasn't a professor. I was just a teaching assistant.

UNGER: *Okay, next. "One of the great corporate builders of the era."*
STANTON: Exaggerated.

UNGER: *"The perfect man at the perfect place at the perfect time."*
STANTON: Well, I was awfully lucky.

UNGER: *"The most literate, tireless and influential spokesman for the broadcasting industry."*
STANTON: [laughing] You want me to comment on that? No, I'm not.

UNGER: *This is from* The New Yorker: *"A few people are born to indispensability. They serve on committees, spring to the fore in emergencies and act as catalysts whenever catalysis is in order. Stanton is one of these."*
STANTON: I think that's a fair assessment.

UNGER: *"Stanton brought respect to the flashy side of show business."*
STANTON: They wouldn't agree to that in Hollywood. [laughter]

UNGER: *"Reserved, but warm and decent.*
STANTON: I'm happy to know that somebody said that.

UNGER: *Now, some negatives—very few, but there are some. "A man who did it by the numbers."*
STANTON: Not true, of course.

UNGER: *"A mind like a Swiss hotel clerk." That's the cruelest one. How do you feel about that?*
STANTON: [laughter] That's too limiting.

UNGER: *"A frightened man wary of being surrounded by smart people, neurotic and insecure."*
STANTON: "Insecure" is probably fair.

UNGER: *Looking back on those days at CBS, what do you feel was your greatest accomplishment there. What would you like to be remembered for at CBS?*
STANTON: The organization. And when I say "organization," I mean the quality of the people and the structure of the company. I take a certain amount of credit for both.

UNGER: *How about since you left CBS, what do you think you've accomplished. What are you proudest of having done since you left CBS?*
STANTON: I think I took the Red Cross back into the international arena. I think I helped restructure the Red Cross. I believe I've made a contribution, too, in my work at Harvard. I believe I helped in the direction of two international newspapers, one *The Observer* in London; and the other, *The International Herald Tribune*. I sat on both of those boards.

UNGER: *Are you sorry that you forced yourself to retire at 65 from CBS? Do you think you would have accomplished a great deal more if you had stayed on?*
STANTON: Oh, everybody who retires thinks he left before he did his best work. No, I don't think so. I think the time was right. I got out at the right time. I was awfully lucky when I got in. You know, the elevator was going up. You couldn't miss. And when I got out ... it was shortly after I got out that competition came in the way of technology and a lot of problems that I'm not sure that I could have dealt with.

UNGER: *You were involved in supervising the building of CBS headquarters– "Black Rock"– in some way, at least working with the architects. Is architecture a special area of interest to you?*
STANTON: I've always wished that I'd been an architect. I also wish that I'd have been a surgeon. When I was an undergraduate, I was a pre-med student. I was accepted at medical

school but didn't go because I didn't figure I could make enough money to pay my way and have time enough to study. I would have preferred another location that would have given us more horizontal space. As an office building, I'm unhappy with my office here. My wife died just at the time I was moving, so as a result, I've still got stuff wrapped up ...

UNGER: *When did you move in here?*
STANTON: April or May of last year.

UNGER: *Do you consider yourself a happy man, now? Are there regrets?*
STANTON: I wouldn't put this particular period of my life as a happy period because after 60 years of living with somebody who was my total infrastructure and did a lot of my reading and a lot of my viewing and kept in touch with everything, to have lost that companionship after 60 happy years, I can't say I'm happy now. I'm getting slowly reconciled to the loss, but ...

UNGER: *Are you reconciled to the place you left in television? Are you reconciled to not being actively in television today?*
STANTON: No. Because I guess I'm the kind of guy who's never reconciled to his accomplishments, but I enjoyed the time I was active. Paley gave me one helluva gift. You know, he said, "Go run with it." And I did.

UNGER: *So, you don't have any bitterness towards Paley.*
STANTON: Oh, no. I should say not. I think he made a mistake in hanging on. I think some of his appointments were less than the best. But, no, there's no bitterness.

UNGER: *What do you think was the major legacy of Paley in television?*
STANTON: The quality of the entertainment schedule and the leadership he gave to the early days of news.

UNGER: *How about the legacy of Sarnoff of NBC?*
STANTON: A man of great vision on the technical side and a very strong leader as an entrepreneur in broadcasting.

UNGER: *The legacy of Leonard Goldenson of ABC?*
STANTON: Goldenson took a company out of the theater business, took the seats out of the real estate and put them in the homes and did one tremendous job of converting a company from theater into broadcasting. And what a showman.

UNGER: *This is a little bit repetitious, but the legacy of Stanton?*
STANTON: I don't want to comment on that.

UNGER: *May I comment on that?*
STANTON: You may do what you want. I'll read it. But I'm the last one to know ... or to say. ■

In 17 years of covering television for *The Christian Science Monitor* Arthur Unger has won national recognition as one of the medium's most influential critics. He is also known for his revealing interviews with TV, stage and movie personalities. In addition to functioning now as TVQ's Special Correspondent, he is preparing a book of memoirs and organizing more than 1200 audio tapes of interviews for eventual donation to an academic archive.

THE EVOLVING LAWYER IMAGE ON TELEVISION

A cross examination of Perry Mason and L.A.Law. What do these programs tell us about the role of lawyers in American life?

BY MICHAEL M. EPSTEIN

Flanked by police officers, you are led in handcuffs to a room where two lawyers are waiting to meet you for the first time. One attorney, young and flamboyant, hands you a card that says "McKenzie, Brackman" and looks impatiently at his Rolex. "Look pal," he scowls, "whether you're guilty or innocent is your business. I specialize in legal technicalities. I'll do everything I can to get you off."

The second attorney, a modestly dressed man with penetrating eyes, silently observes you from the far side of the room. He waits for you to approach him and smiles. "My name is Perry Mason. If you tell me you are innocent and I believe you, I will find out who really committed this crime and prove your innocence to the world." One of the cops reminds you that your time is running out. You must choose one of these attorneys to be your legal counsel. Which one would you pick?"

Judging from the sheer volume of testimonials offered by lawyers, journalists, and the public after long-time *Perry Mason* Star Raymond Burr died last September, America's answer to the hypothetical above seems clear: Perry Mason wins hands down over any of *L.A. Law's* attorneys as our country's lawyer of choice. Even *The New York Times* recently said that the passing of *L.A. Law* stars such as Corbin Bernsen or Richard Dysart would hardly generate the outpouring of praise that Burr has enjoyed posthumously.

According to a poll taken before Burr's death, the public admires Perry Mason more than any *real* attorney alive or dead—including Abraham Lincoln, Attorney General Janet Reno, and virtually every supreme court justice. Only F. Lee Bailey, the celebrated real-life trial attorney, garnered more votes. More startling is the palpable sense of loss that flooded the legal community with word of Burr's passing. Testimonials from actual lawyers too numerous to mention have appeared—and continue to appear—in the legal press.

Raymond Burr as Perry Mason

A law professor friend recently described the curious mixture of puzzlement and pride he felt when he noticed a framed portrait of Raymond Burr gracing the entrance to a reputable law school's library. Even the American Bar Association has jumped on the Mason bandwagon. In a prepared statement, ABA president William Ide III eulogized Burr on behalf of the profession: "We regard his passing as if we lost one of our own."

In a world where so-called "lawyer bashing" has found widespread favor in New York, Hollywood and even Washington, how did good old Perry Mason manage to become so admired and beloved? Part of the answer to this question lies in the way television depicts the practicing attorney. For nearly forty-five years, programs featuring law themes and lawyer characters have presented a variety of images and messages about attorneys to a fragmented American public. What do these programs say about the perceived role of lawyers in American culture? Why more than any other professional group are lawyers both loved and hated?

The most popular and acclaimed of these programs have been *Perry Mason* and *L.A. Law*; each shares the distinction of having been a mega-hit that helped thrust the legal profession into the forefront of public consciousness. Yet these programs say a lot of different things about the perceived role of lawyers in American life. Both of these courtroom dramas represent a fundamental shift in the way Americans see their lawyers—and, ultimately, themselves.

To understand how lawyer images have changed, one must look at how television perpetuates myths about the legal profession. Beginning with the earliest network broadcasts of the late 1940s and 1950s, television's most pervasive lawyer myth has traditionally been that lawyers function primarily to mediate social conflict. Programs such as *The Amazing Mr. Malone, The Black Robe, Famous Jury Trials, Justice*, and *They Stand Accused* featured lawyer characters whose main task was to help society reconcile oppositional tensions such as state power versus individual rights, good versus evil, technology versus nature, wealth versus poverty, and tradition versus change. In their relentless quests for the "truth," these early lawyer characters, much like television journalists, functioned metaphorically in the mediating roles of detective and therapist. Nowhere is this more evident than in the program that has defined the golden age of lawyer dramas, *Perry Mason*.

From September 1957 to September 1966, *Perry Mason*, a courtroom drama based on characters created by lawyer-novelist Erle Stanley Gardner, aired in prime-time on the CBS television network. Week after week, Mason (Raymond Burr) would pursue criminal cases in accordance with a narrative formula that did not vary. After deciding to represent an accused murderer who, he believes, is inno-

cent, Mason would search for evidence exonerating his client and investigate friendly and hostile witnesses. Then, in a dramatic flourish that usually occurred in court, he would confront the real killer and elicit a confession, thereby solving the crime to everyone's satisfaction.

Invariably, Perry Mason would function more as a detective and therapist than as a practitioner of law, spending the bulk of his time uncovering clues to a perplexing mystery and reassuring his client—and viewers—that justice shall not wrongfully punish the innocent. It is in these dual roles as sleuth and therapist that Perry Mason functions as an umpire for a variety of different social conflicts.

In a world where so-called lawyer bashing has found widespread favor in New York, Hollywood and even Washington, how did good old Perry Mason manage to become so admired and beloved?

As a detective, Perry Mason mediates conflicts between state bureaucracy and the individual, honesty and duplicity, and civic duty and partisan advocacy. In every case, Mason is presented with an individual who has wrongly been put on trial for murder by an impersonal state prosecuting apparatus. Hamilton Burger, the District Attorney, approaches each case confident that the weight of the evidence collected by the state will prove the defendant's guilt. He is not interested in saving the individual from conviction and frequently objects when Mason pursues arguments that would tend to incriminate another party.

Mason, on the other hand, is clearly convinced from the outset that his client is innocent. Yet, in his vigorous defense of the wrongly accused, Mason always remains mindful that it is the state's proper function to mete out justice to those who have committed crimes. Unlike most criminal defense lawyers, Mason is on good terms with the police. In several episodes, including "The Case of the 50 Millionth Frenchman," "The Case of the Arrogant Arsonist," and "The Case of the Woeful Widower," Mason works side by side with local law enforcement officers.

Without exception, Mason resolves this conflict by identifying and proving the guilt of the real perpetrator. Thus, through diligent sleuthing, Mason is able to exact the justice the state demands without compromising the rights of innocent individuals. Judge and prosecutor, the very embodiments of the state, are ultimately pleased to accept Mason's disposition of the case. True to his role as the people's self-appointed healer, Mason will even help restore a wronged client to the position he or she enjoyed before trial, arranging for the recovery of stolen moneys or vouching for the client's reputation with employers. In most cases, however, any damage to the defendant's reputation disappears instantly upon dismissal of the charges.

Even the opening title sequence symbolically underscores Mason's role as arbiter in an ongoing battle between state power and individual rights. It begins with a shot of the judge's bench in an empty courtroom over which the show's title is emblazoned. As the stirring music swells, the camera slowly pans over to Mason, who is sitting entirely alone in court, looking down at a legal writing pad. The camera moves in for a close up. Mason looks up from his pad and smiles knowingly toward the judge's bench. At that moment Mason is a figure greater than the state or any individual; alone in the state's chamber, he has become the mediating

force of justice itself.

Perry Mason also functions to heal the breach between honesty and deceit. This is most often characterized in the manner in which he handles two competing tensions endemic to law practice: civic duty and client advocacy. As an officer of the court, Mason, like most attorneys, has an obligation to be truthful and sincere in his contacts with the state. At the same time, however, he is professionally bound to keep his clients' confidences and represent them zealously, even if that means obscuring the truth. A man of impeccable honesty, Mason struggles to resolve these competing tensions. Operating within the detective formula, Mason uses his investigating abilities—and those of his private eye colleague, Paul Drake—successfully to alleviate these conflicts.

In several episodes, Mason meets with prospective clients whom he believes may be lying or hiding something. In some instances, if he believes an individual is lying about innocence, he will refuse or defer representation and conduct his own investigation—independent of the state's and at his own expense—to decide for himself. In every instance, however, Mason and Drake are able to expose prospective clients' and other parties' deceptions by uncovering irrefutable evidence of the truth behind the mystery. In "The Case of the Woeful Widower," for example, Mason appears in court as an *amicus curiae*—a "friend of the court" who represents ideas or positions as opposed to individuals—because he believes that only he can unravel the lies and deceptions of all the parties to the case.

The easiest cases in which Mason negotiates truth and deceit are the ones that do not involve actual clients. Because Mason uses his investigatory skills to weed out the untrustworthy before he represents them in court, he is rarely confronted with the ethical dilemma of what to do when a client gives him potentially incriminating evidence of which the state is unaware.

In one of the episodes I viewed, however, Mason was retained by a client as a precautionary matter following what the state decided was the apparent suicide of her friend. The client confides in Mason that, contrary to her statement to the police, she was at the scene and saw someone shoot the victim. Although Mason believes she is innocent, he is torn about whether to go to the prosecutor with the truth because it might result in his client being charged with murder.

Ultimately, he resolves the situation by discussing the situation hypothetically with D.A. Hamilton Burger. Burger, coincidentally, has stumbled on other evidence incriminating to the client and uses the occasion to inform Mason that the client will be charged with murder. Relieved of the ethical conflict, Mason vigorously defends his client and proves her innocent by uncovering evidence against the real killer.

In many respects, Perry Mason in his way was a therapist as well as a detective; much like a therapist but unlike most real-life defense attorneys, Perry Mason is a guiding moral force both in and out of the courtroom. Never is Mason rebuked by the D.A. or admonished by a judge for unethical or otherwise improper conduct. Even hostile witnesses, including the real guilty party, refrain from attacking his character.

In several episodes, Mason is moved by, and offers advice about, the moral concerns of clients and others. In "The Case of the Frightened Fisherman," for example, an acquaintance asks Mason to perform the role of ombudsman in a matter involving his bitterly estranged wife. The woman accepts Mason in that role without

reservation.

With his ability to listen patiently, his air of informed authority, and his apparent detachment from the kind of personal concerns others experience every day, Perry Mason resembles the professional analyst; and he even tends to treat his clients like patients. In most episodes, an unstable individual sits alone with Mason in his office and recounts a tale of woe requiring Mason's advice or active assistance. Mason sits behind his desk, listens intently to his prospective client's story, makes occasional notes, and asks probing questions. This is a lawyer who fields frantic phone calls and unannounced visits at the office day and night, and is always available and willing to reassure his client with his undivided personal attention. Indeed, like many psychotherapists—but unlike most lawyers—Mason treats his client/patient as if he or she exists in a vacuum. He is never shown to be distracted by matters related to other clients; that Mason might have other clients' competing for his valuable time is never even hinted at.

Though Mason ostensibly earns a decent living, I have yet to view a scene in which Perry Mason even talks about accepting money from a client– nor has he ever refused a representation because his client could not pay.

Mason's incredible intellect and air of informed authority provides his clients—and everyone else—with reassurance and relief during the tense time before and during trial. Mason is never confused or uncertain when asked to respond to someone's question or to explain a technical legal position or some complex scientific principle. He is supremely confident in his own knowledge. Even Hamilton Burger will turn to Mason for a factual explanation or to clear up confusion. Always one step behind his opposing counsel, Burger, sometimes skeptically but always sincerely, will look to Mason to simplify the complex.

When a client seeks Mason's help, he is prepared to handle the problem no matter what it entails. Thus, although he nearly exclusively represents murder defendants, he holds himself out to be an expert in virtually every other area of practice as well, including probate, defamation, theft, and divorce. Just as he can simplify the complex, he is able to master all the practices of legal specialties that our increasingly technocratic society has wrought upon us. In both cases, Mason functions to propitiate tensions between nature and technology, familiarity and alienation, and tradition and change.

The bridging between tradition and change is also inherent in Perry Mason's detachment from the personal concerns of everyday life. In episode after episode, we are given full access to Mason's professional responsibilities; yet, we are never permitted entry into his personal sphere. The audience learns virtually nothing about his home, his personal tastes and habits, or his love life. Everything about Mason is professional—distant from any hint of the purely personal.

Although he expresses an aesthetic appreciation of women, he never shows himself to be sexually attracted to a female client, nor does he ever refer to a girlfriend. No details about the location or style of his home are given. Even what little we do see offers few clues about Perry Mason, the man. The office, for example, is

devoid of mementos of an exclusively personal nature. The decor is simple and neat, although it is neither ultra-modern or old-fashioned. If clothes indeed make the man, then we still would know little about him. In every episode of the original series, Mason, with rare exception, wore a dark suit with a thin, dark tie and plain white shirt.

Because we are barred access to the ups and downs of his personal life, Mason enjoys the illusion of appearing unchanged in his many years of solving cases according to formula. A constant in a world of continuous change, Mason remains unscathed by social change. Although Mason is clearly depicted as Los Angeles's most successful attorney, we have no opportunity to see the material fruits of that success.

Instead, all we see are his modest clothing and office decor. Though Mason ostensibly earns a decent living, I have yet to view a scene in which Perry Mason even talks about accepting money from a client; nor

WILLIAMS VS. ROSE

The controversy over lawyers and how they are portrayed on television has been going on for a long time. Thirty years ago, *Television Quarterly* [Fall 1964, Vol. III, Number 4] published a debate in the form of two contrasting article by two distinguished adversaries—Edward Bennett Williams, the great trial lawyer, and Reginald Rose, the eminent TV dramatist, the creator and executive producer of the memorable series *The Defenders*, and the classic *Twelve Angry Men*.

"TV has taught the public through endless repetitions that trial lawyers are a scheming, tricky lot. This has actually produced repercussions in real life. The least significant witness now comes to court, expecting to be tricked and harassed by inquisitorial gimmicks." Williams wrote.

"In general, TV law programs, hampered by the dramatic demands of TV's chromatic precision often reach for the easy denoument."

On the whole, Williams tended to approve of *The Defenders* which he called " ... unusual among law programs, and TV programs in general, in its effort to introduce substance on a weekly basis."

He was sharply critical of *Perry Mason*, however, who he pointed out "... has lost only one case in eight years ... Mason is always forced to be a courtroom magician—an attorney who wins consistently by springing an overlooked piece of evidence, or by forcing a seemingly innocent witness to confess on the witness stand that he has committed the crime."

Reginald Rose made a strong case for TV dramatists, and claimed Williams ignored that ... "We are working within a fictional context, and more specifically within the dramatic form. The realistic drama is obliged to provide verisimilitude, but it cannot offer *literal* adherence to actuality ... We are in the business of providing entertainment within a form which has been described by William Archer as the art of crisis. The law offers us a natural area of development for stories of crisis in human affairs ..."

Commenting on *Perry Mason*, Rose asserted "We do not think our characters (In *The Defenders*) are made of cardboard or plastic. In fairness to such series as *Perry Mason*, where they do tend in this direction, I can only say that the producers did not intend their program to be about law. It is conceived as an entertaining mystery program with the same elements to be found in any Western or detective series."

has he ever refused a representation because his client could not pay.

A quarter of a century later in the same city of Los Angeles a group of lawyers reflect an image very different from *Perry Mason*. This is the world of the affluent law firm of McKenzie, Brackman, and it has very little to do with universal truth and justice. Unlike Mason, the lawyers of *L.A. Law* do not function as mediators of conflicts inherent in the complexity of modern society. Instead, they leave questions unanswered and social tensions unresolved.

In some respects, however, *L.A. Law* operates in ways *Perry Mason* did not. For example, *L.A. Law* features minority and women attorneys (and interracial coupling), while Mason functioned in a criminal justice system that was exclusively white male. These mediations, although significant, do not speak directly to the issue of lawyering.

L.A. Law focuses on many of the same social conflicts apparent in *Perry Mason*: Individual versus state, honesty versus deceit, and tradition versus change, among others. But, unlike Mason, the lawyers of McKenzie, Brackman are generally unable to bring understanding to these conflicts. In fact, more often than not, they become part of the conflict and make matters worse for their clients. Consider, for example, several scenarios taken from episodes that aired in 1988 and 1992.

In one episode, Arnie Becker, the firm's highly successful divorce specialist, represents a man whose estranged wife claims sexually molested their young daughter. Becker, stymied by a system of justice that is biased against accused fathers, angrily tries to defend a client he is convinced is innocent. After the judge rules in favor of the mother, the father kidnaps the girl and goes into hiding. Concerned that she'll never see her daughter again, the mother confesses publicly to Becker that she made the story up because she felt Becker and her husband had railroaded her in the couple's divorce settlement. She explicitly points her figure at Becker and her own counsel.

Unlike Perry Mason, L.A. Law is punctuated with scenes in which clients and others accuse lawyers of making things worse rather than better for themselves and society.

Indeed, although Becker convinces his client to return to court with his daughter, the lawyers did make the situation worse. The judge decides against both parents and remands the girl to foster care; he angrily rebukes both lawyers for having manipulated the parents in order to win the case. He reminds the attorneys that their role is not to win at any cost, but to help resolve conflict. Judge, lawyers and clients are all visibly upset as the scene fades to black. Conflicts between honesty and deceit, individual and state power, and male versus female are exacerbated here, not relieved.

Unlike *Perry Mason*, *L.A. Law* is punctuated with scenes in which clients and others accuse lawyers of making things worse rather than better for themselves and for society. In one episode, firm lawyer Victor Sifuentes represents his lover, accused of murdering her wealthy husband, even though he knows she committed the crime and destroyed evidence. In another episode, Sifuentes reluctantly represents a hospital which wants to prevent a couple from starving their irreversibly comatose daughter to death. Although in both these cases he

successfully represents his clients, his victories are not sweet. The young lawyer is visibly shaken by what he achieved in the courtroom. Others accuse him of perpetrating a miscarriage of justice.

The lawyers of McKenzie, Brackman emphatically are not involved in investigatory work. Nor have I seen any evidence that they have sought out the regular assistance of police detectives or private eyes. They are, in every case, less interested in discovering an objective "truth" than concerned with getting their client off, going so far as to suppress or ignore evidence incriminating to their clients.

The typical *L.A. Law* case involves one party's word against another's or conflicting interpretations of law or policy. Facts are either not in dispute or impossible to prove. Unlike Perry Mason, *L.A. Law* characters cannot exonerate clients and make the world whole by unearthing the "truth."

As analysts, the lawyers of McKenzie, Brackman fail even more miserably. None of the attorneys is a moral role model; nor do any possess the ability to listen patiently, the air of superior knowledge, and the detached personal sphere that characterize the professionalized therapist. Although the characters frequently try to distinguish between right and wrong, theirs is a subjective right and wrong—not the objectified right and wrong that is at the heart of social morality. In this firm lawyers will argue one position or another in a dispute not because they believe it is right or wrong, but because they are paid to argue that position. In the rare instance that a lawyer claims to take an objective moral view of a case, other lawyers—often office colleagues engaged in informal discussion—will vehemently argue a different moral position.

Since the program rarely provides closure to moral issues, objective morality is almost always rendered subjective. Even when it comes to obeying laws or policies that uphold modernist notions of morality, many of the lawyers fall short. As Victor Sifuentes's defense of his lover indicates, the adultery statute is one law that can be broken. Nor is it uncommon to see Arnie Becker or Douglas Brackman sleeping with a client or a secretary. Other infractions committed by McKenzie and Brackman lawyers include knowingly accepting counterfeit merchandise, obstruction of justice, bribery, and insider trading.

Although *L.A. Law* characters can be authoritative at certain times, they lack the air of infallible authority that therapists—and Perry Mason—have. While Mason is a generalist with extensive knowledge of various specialties, the "L.A. Lawyers" are repeatedly shown to be ignorant of law outside their areas of specialty. In the episode in which Abby Perkins and Ann Kelsey trade stock on insider information, Kelsey confides to her husband that she knows virtually nothing about the Securities Act of 1934. In another episode, Brackman, involved in a bitter divorce, knows nothing about how to proceed. He is totally dependent upon Arnie Becker's expertise and experience.

Attorneys are frequently the victim of pranks or otherwise duped by other attorneys or secretaries. Even the "Venus Butterfly" episode, in which one lawyer convinces several others that he has learned the secret to unusually good love-making, underscores the point that lawyers can be naive and ill-informed but still be competent.

Aware that they don't have all the answers for their clients, for society or for themselves, these attorneys look to others for meaning, instead of explaining meaning to others. In this manner, they are more like patients than therapists. Indeed, during the last few seasons, at least two of the firm's partners, Brackman and Becker,

have entered into therapy.

In the post-modern world of *L.A. Law*, even therapist characters do not act as mediators. Brackman's sex therapist, hired to help his troubled marriage, instead falls in love with him and has an affair. Becker's analyst suffers a heart attack and dies while Becker bares his soul. Eyes turned away, Becker mistakes the analyst's dying words and accompanying grunt for encouragement. Another psychiatrist is sued for failing to warn one of his patients that another patient was about to murder her. As it turns out, it is the *psychiatrist* who had been doing the killings all along.

As some of the previously cited episodes suggest, the private lives of the partners and associates are just as important—if not more important—than their professional lives. Viewers get to look in on the most intimate details of the lawyers' lives: who's having sex with whom, marital problems, joyous occasions and private sorrow. We get to see how wealthy the lawyers are, where they live, the kind of cars they drive, and how they otherwise spend their money.

Scholars and pundits have commented that *L.A. Law's* characterization of lawyering is considerably more accurate than *Perry Mason's*. Burr eulogies aside, this does not come as a surprise to me. Lawyering, in my view, is very much at home in the world of competing truths and subjective justice. Attorneys essentially step into the shoes of clients, argue vociferously on their behalf, and then walk away from the matter, win or lose. Moreover, the cases they argue are not straightforward investigations into facts that take less then a week from indictment to verdict.

Today's courtroom battles are complex litigations with multiple parties that can last for years or criminal trials that are centered on ambiguous facts and technical applications of law. Even if a lawyer thinks a case can be won, he or she often opts for a plea bargain or an out-of-court settlement in order to help the client save money or avoid jail.

All of this has little to do with guilt and innocence, or right and wrong. For many attorneys, law work is less a matter of noble principle than a matter of pragmatic expedience—and financial renumeration . Other practitioners are eager to take on the mantle of the mediating crusader for justice. Still, whether they're idealistic or cynical, most members of the profession would probably agree that lawyering was never like the way it is depicted in *Perry Mason* or *L.A. Law*. The truth is, the reality of bar practice is somewhere in between these small screen extremes; it may help explain what attorney Charles Rosenberg, one of *L.A. Law's* creators, describes as America's schizophrenic fascination with lawyers. ■

Michael M. Epstein left the Wall Street equivalent of McKenzie. Brackman to practice law in the Perry Mason tradition, and to get a Phd. at the University of Michigan. He is currently at work on a variety of TV projects, including a book on *Star Trek* and a survey of lawyer images in popular culture.

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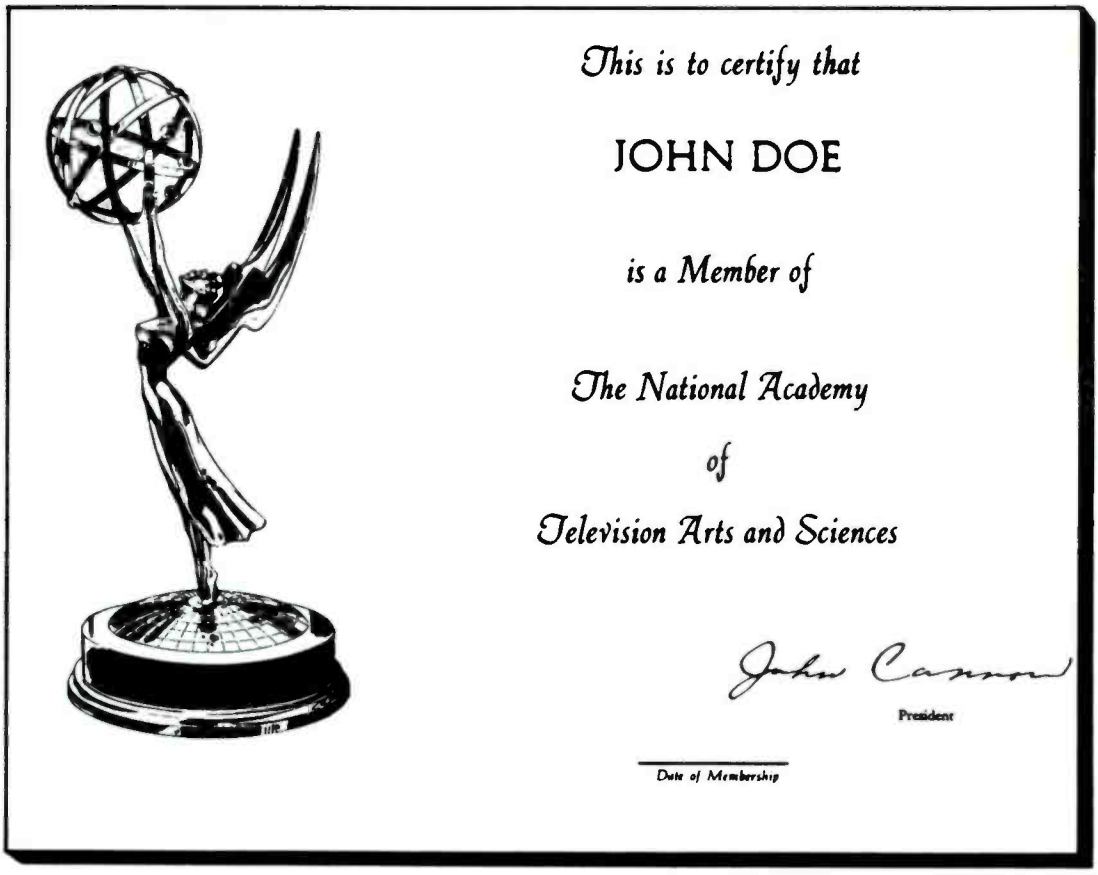

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NEWS, ETHICS, AND SPLIT-PERSONALITY JOURNALISM

BY EVERETTE E. DENNIS

When we look at the condition of American journalism today it is sometimes difficult to tell whether the extraordinary changes brought about by the convergence of new technologies, which allows for faster and more efficient newsgathering, processing, and dissemination, is elevating or debasing journalistic quality.

In my job at the Freedom Forum Media Studies Center, I am frequently asked to comment on the state of journalism, usually in connection with some controversy. These inquiries from television correspondents, magazine writers, and newspaper reporters are concerned with everything from coverage of politics to the ethics of particular news organizations and even particular news people. I have been asked to comment, for example, on the role of network anchors, the NBC Dateline controversy, the recent tragedy at Waco, and many other topics. Often the questions from media critics and reporters are connected to technology and the changes that have come to American media, especially in the 1980s.

This has been a time when the economics of communication have shifted markedly, growing ever more global and giant; when ownerships have changed and concentration has accelerated; when hundreds of new outlets—some of them cable channels, others magazines and newspapers—have expanded people's options for information and news. All this was spurred by the satellite, the computer and other devices that gave us instantaneous live news from most points on the globe. Along with new electronic databases, computer graphics, and the beginnings of artificial intelligence, both the look and the nature of the news are changing.

Those who carefully track these

changes make one of two conclusions, and it is easy to see why: Some say that journalism is in decline, while others say it is improving, causing us to ask whether journalism indeed has a split personality. Let us examine these two propositions.

First, journalism is in decline. In February 1990 the world was treated to the battle of the Trumps, wherein the marital squabbling of America's tycoon of the moment, Donald Trump, a flamboyant, publicity-seeking billionaire, and his equally avaricious wife Ivana, pushed Nelson Mandela, Eastern Europe, Central America, and the heavyweight boxing championship of the world off the front pages of the tabloids and consumed both time and space in our most respectable newspapers, magazines, and television programs. This exhibitionistic performance by the tabloids, which spread to other media, came on the heals of the expansion of so-called tabloid television, which makes it difficult for viewers to distinguish news from entertainment. The Trump affair, many critics argued, was news coverage run amok—news that trivialized our world and debased other more important matters. But what caused it to happen in the first place, especially in the face of such important competing news?

I believe it was, in part at least, technology. In many respects tabloid newspapers—the kind with big, blotchy headlines that scream out from the newsstand—are a thing of the past. Except for the supermarket-tabloids, most big-city "scandal sheets" are artifacts of another generation. They were initially born in a period of great newspaper competition, and though that time has passed, the great expansion in television and cable programs has brought back keen competition for readers, viewers, and advertising dollars. This is especially true for television news, where the four broadcast networks and an increasing number of sensational tabloid television shows such as *Geraldo, A Current Affair, Hard Copy, America's Most Wanted* and others are competing fiercely for essentially the same audience.

In the midst of this intense battle are the last remaining big-city tabloids. *The New York Daily News, New York Post, New York Newsday, the Boston Herald,* and a few others are trying to survive in a market where large numbers of attentive consumers are best achieved in television, not print media. In their scramble to outdo local television news and tabloid television, columnists and editors at these papers seized on the Trump story and played it for all it was worth and more. And as a story it worked. It was a perfect formula to foster sensationalism. We had celebrity, wealth, power, sex, a love triangle, even religion, and Valentine's Day. This exhibitionistic explosion might have been limited mostly to New York audiences if it had not been for a vitriolic battle between syndicated columnists, the clash of high-profile media consultants, and other "players" who, for a few days, made this both a national and international story.

The extraordinary competition represented in the coverage of the Trump affair was linked to new technical devices that more accurately measure television viewing (the people meters) and have for the first time calibrated the important role of cable, VCRs, and other competitive media that are pushing newspapers and newsmagazines in new directions. Too often that means away from the hard news of economics, government, and the environment and toward human interest and gossip.

Technology has also been a culprit in more direct ways, evidenced by two examples in 1989. First, there was the dramatic report on *ABC World News*

Tonight, wherein viewers were treated to some remarkably grainy footage showing an American diplomat passing secrets to the Soviets. There was only one thing wrong: The pictures were a deliberate deception, a video "re-creation." Those depicted were not diplomats and spies, but ABC staff role-playing. More importantly, perhaps, *the story was based on allegations*, not proven facts.

This incident and subsequent simulations of news events, historical scenes and even projections of the future became something of a media cause célèbre for several months before most of the networks decided to ban their use. Such re-creations are still common, however, on some of the tabloid television programs and severely confuse viewers who are trying to distinguish fact from fiction. Not incidentally, dramatic re-creations were long ago defended by press lord Henry Luce as "fakery in allegiance to the truth."

There is nothing inherently wrong with the wonderful technological devices that bring us dramatic re-creations—it is the *way* they are presented that misleads the public and impairs media credibility. In fact, a study commissioned by the Times Mirror Company in 1989 found that a substantial number of Americans could not definitively judge whether some television programs were news or entertainment.

The other regrettable, technology-aided judgment of 1989 was the networks' use of a split screen in their coverage of the U.S. invasion of Panama. On one side of the screen were flag-draped coffins of American soldiers killed in Panama and on the other a jocular press conference with President Bush. The visual effect was what one critic called a "split personality": There was little direct relationship between the two pictures and the president did not know that his press conference was being juxtaposed with the unloading of caskets. Here the split screen, which originally came to us in sports coverage, was so thoughtlessly used as to make both the president and the media look bad. It did nothing to advance news coverage, although it could have.

But beyond these two examples is ample evidence that news coverage is not declining or suffering at all. Thus the proposition that *journalism is improving*.

We can contrast the negative effects of misused technology with some important and impressive coverage in a year when the news media seemed to celebrate one of their finest hours. Correspondents and anchors captured the turmoil in Tiananmen Square, the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the great changes—subtle and violent—in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. At the same time critical activities in Central America and South Africa also captured our attention. And quick, accurate reporting gave us stunning coverage of the 1989 San Francisco earthquake and Hurricane Andrew in 1992. The same media that brought us these matters of great (and probably lasting) moment, also gave us news of drugs and crime, as well as the environment, government and the economy.

And here the principal catalyst to comprehending these events was technology. Tiny, lightweight cameras and easy satellite uplinks took viewers to the scene of great world events as they happened, even if they did exhaust our valiant, globe-trotting network anchors. The superb coverage of the Philippine revolution, for example, occurred when electronic newsgathering (ENG) was just celebrating its 10th anniversary. At the Media Studies Center we conducted a demonstration contrasting news from the Philippines a decade earlier with the events that led to the downfall of Ferdinand Marcos. The revolution

that deposed Marcos was covered live from the scene, a story that developed minute by minute, visually and dramatically unfolding in living color. Only a decade before, broadcast news had relied heavily on still, black-and-white photographs supplied by the Associated Press. One can only imagine the effects of these stark contrasts on what people know, understand, and feel about the great news events of today.

Juxtaposed against these two divergent appraisals of our media is the continuing worry that journalistic performance is necessarily influenced by the forces of globalism and giantism that are swallowing up our media system and those of other countries. News organizations that are a part of big business are governed by market forces, and market research is said to determine what America (and the rest of the world) reads, hears, and watches.

Thus, we readers and viewers are hearing contradictory things about our media. We hear that news coverage is out of control, witnessing the Trump affair or dramatic re-creations. People who follow these arguments and observe news coverage that is based on the musings of gossip columnists, rumor, and deliberate deception might conclude there is little quality control in the information reaching us.

On the other hand, there are the extraordinary performances by journalists covering more of the globe than ever before, such as both Tom Brokaw's and Peter Jenning's reportage of world events in 1989-1990, the Persian Gulf War and the dangerous, demanding coverage of the former Yugoslavia. Considering the human and financial resources invested for the *New York Times* and other media organizations to deliver what may well be the best performance on a story that I have seen in my lifetime—that of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Bloc—the case is easily made that American journalism is getting better all the time.

No matter which interpretation of the news best fits our needs and biases, most of us agree that what we really want is "the truth," however illusory that notion is. Still, we are confronted by economic movements on Wall Street and those in boardrooms around the world who think of the media mostly as machines producing widgets. We are told by some critics that the media more than ever are driven by the greed of a market that values short-run profits over long-term investments. The results for networks and national news-magazines, we are told, are shrinking staffs and depleted resources. The audience numbers that generate advertising revenues drive news organizations and, in a circular fashion, cause them to court audiences to whom their advertisers can sell their products and services. In a system of communication paid for by only two revenue streams—user fees and advertising—how could it be otherwise? Information is for sale to the highest bidder, and the media have organized themselves to court upscale audiences, paying little or no attention to the underclass and other unattractive and—by market definition—dispossessed communities.

A close examination of the media world today, as well as the role news plays in it, is a view of great fragmentation. With scores of cable channels, thousands of magazines and other rapidly fragmenting media, it is clear that virtually every interest and every point of view, no matter how narrow, is being served. At the same time traditional media such as newspapers and television are challenged by the pressures of the new media and find it increasingly difficult to serve "the whole community." Instead they serve the "audience" of readers and viewers who actually subscribe, pay cable fees, or loyally watch television

news. We must continually ask whether the fragmentation that enhances freedom of expression to smaller and smaller communities of interest also promotes the kind of freedom that bonds a nation together. We have not yet begun to ask these questions with clarity, let alone find methods for answering them rigorously and accurately.

Perhaps we need a national endowment to preserve the news—not a government agency or even a political mandate—but a commitment by our news organizations to do more than business as usual, to engage in a national commitment to quality news in a manner that instructs us all about: (a) the operative theory of journalism by which any given news organization guides itself; (b) the resources it has devoted to newsgathering; (c) the ways in which the public ought to assess and evaluate the results; and finally, (d) how individual readers and viewers might "talk back" to or interact with news editors and producers.

Although I believe that the diversity that brings us Trumpian headlines in the tabloids also brings us serious analysis on the editorial page, we lack serious understanding of our current "theory" of journalism. Journalists hate the word theory, but it is the best word I know to describe those commitments, values, and organizing principles that explain what they are doing.

Years ago our operative theory in American journalism was "objectivity," also known as "the Jack Webb school of journalism" and consisted of a "just the facts, ma'am" approach to balancing "both sides" of a controversy. I was one of many writers and critics beginning in the late 1960s who strongly opposed this simple-minded approach to journalism in an increasingly ambiguous world in which there are seemingly 16 sides to every controversy, not just two. Objectivity was also a theory of journalism that almost always valued official sources over ordinary people. In 1971 I wrote that "the increasing complexity of public affairs made it difficult to confine reporting to the strait-jacket of unelaborated fact" (Dennis & Rivers, 1971)

Although editors initially rejected the many assaults on objectivity, it was not long before they, too, retreated from the concept and began to talk about "fairness," which was a vague, fuzzy and somewhat more comfortable euphemism for objectivity, with some complex twists. Unfortunately, in rejecting good old-fashioned objectivity we really did not replace it with any alternative model, and partly as a consequence many in the public are confused about news coverage that gives the same value to the Trump affair as it does to the release of Nelson Mandela.

I believe that we ought to return to a new interpretative objectivity in which central facts can be verified but in which matters of interpretation and analysis are identified as such and left to reader and viewer discretion. There are descriptive details and facts that can be sorted out and identified in virtually every news situation, ranging from a simple police matter to a complex international controversy. Events arise, people are involved, and situations can be observed. This is and ought to be descriptive, verified journalism at its best.

I would pair this kind of descriptive journalism, which would be by definition as impartial as possible, with the yield of modern computer-assisted reporting and database retrieval. We have better and more systematic tools than ever before and can assemble more facts more efficiently, thus greatly enhancing our reporting. Here again, technology can be an aid to reporting rather than a hindrance to understanding.

At the same time, we need to pair descriptive journalism with more

interpretative and analytic work that tells us what the various forces and vested interests are in connection with a news story. Sometimes, when the media perform particularly poorly, as they did in their late and labored coverage of AIDS, they need to publicly fess up to missed cues, bias, and less than exemplary coverage. The nation's major media picked up the AIDS story long after it had evolved, and then only because of personal factors, not any sense of objective reality. This sad chapter in American journalism is documented in James Kinsella's book *Covering the Plague: AIDS and the American Media*. In large part the story was ignored because editors believed it affected unattractive and unimportant constituencies. Only after the Rock Hudson revelations and other instances in which individual journalists' families were involved did the press begin with any seriousness to cover this critical public health problem. Some critics believe the press should shoulder some of the blame for the spread of the disease because of a kind of de facto censorship that deprived the American people of important information. When subsequent coverage—much of it superb—did gain momentum, health practices improved markedly.

The AIDS story demonstrated the hypocrisy of the journalistic fairness argument. Not only was a major public health story underplayed or missed entirely for years but it also gained notoriety only when there were personal stakes for reporters and editor. This was not impartial journalism, nor was it in any sense fair.

It seems to be that such a new interpretive objectivity would be enhanced if our media organizations—without being overly self-conscious—told us more about their methods. How are major stories being covered and with what staffing—both in numbers and with attention to the backgrounds and interests of reporters? In a good deal of international coverage we have had reporters with mixed experience, knowledge, credentials, and dedication to impartial reports. Many will readily admit their ideological preferences, some of which are hardly conducive to impartial reporting. Leaders of media organizations would help their own cause and understanding if they would step forward and indicate by what standard they want to be judged. In a society in which all of us can be critics and analysts if we wish, it would be helpful to have straightforward statements from leading editors and broadcast executives indicating just what their goals, purposes, and measures of quality control are.

In a period when we are increasing our capacity for interactive television and other two-way systems, our media need to concern themselves with a better system of public feedback. There are the superb Times Mirror studies of public perceptions of the news media, studies that draw important baseline data. But we need more than that: a chance for readers and viewers to be heard, not one by one in every editor's office, but possibly through computer inventories of people's concerns and grievances. Some of these will have to do with access to information and understandability; others will focus on factual errors or differences of interpretation. Some criticisms will be on target, others will be terribly wrong, but collectively they will provide better intelligence with which editors and other media people can determine how well they are doing. This idea is not to slavishly please readers and viewers but to make certain that news is being presented in a coherent and effective fashion. Readers and viewers might themselves be encouraged to suggest approaches to the public dialogue that would be good for all of

us and as well advance freedom of expression.

I believe that, in general, American journalism really is improving. There are occasional egregious slips, sometimes brought on by overzealous use of technology in instances when new tools are used thoughtlessly or in a trivial way. But when used with foresight, as with computer-assisted reporting or electronic newsgathering, news can be presented with more dramatic force and more accuracy, and the result will be a better-informed public. To do that, news people need to plan their work with greater vision and at the same time be willing to explain it in an open manner that may often invite public criticism.

Then, I think, we will have both a freer, more responsive and more vital journalism in America and elsewhere in the world. We might even have a new allegiance to the truth made possible not just by new technological tools and more thoughtful interactive journalism but by mutual respect between speaker and listener, between the media and their audience, that we so sorely need today. ■

Everette E. Dennis is Executive Director of the Freedom Forum Media Studies Center at Columbia University, and Vice-President of the Freedom Forum (formerly the Gannett Foundation). Previously he was Dean of the School of Journalism at the University of Oregon. This essay is adapted from a chapter in his recent book, *Of Media and People*, published by Sage.

VIEWPOINT

TV Violence Hurts

"For decades, media writers, directors and producers have been trying to tell us that the violent content of the media they create also doesn't hurt, that is, that despite its glamour and impact, it plays no role in making this a more violent society.

"They may have had a case earlier in this century when portrayals of media violence were less believeable, but today the proliferation of realistic-looking mayhem, assault and death makes for a totally different situation. One expert believes that of the 23,000 murders in the U.S. every year, at least half are due to the influence and desensitizing effects of media violence. At minimum, media violence may be most influential in modeling the use of deadly force as the primary, if not the only, way to solve problems and resolve interpersonal conflict.

"Many blame media for the rise in violence, but of course that's not the whole story. It's also clear that overcrowding, pervasive life-long poverty, hunger, joblessness and drug addiction–as well as the ready availablility of guns–also contribute to our skyrocketing homicide rate. But the media connection can no longer be ignored.

"Some of the details of this connection might be questioned. Maybe the numbers could be debated. But the fact that a connection exists is hard to dispute, which leads us to an inescapable conclusion. Something must be done."

—Elizabeth Thoman,
Media & Values
Number 62.

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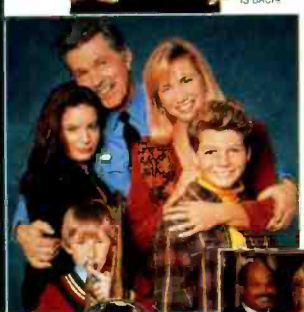
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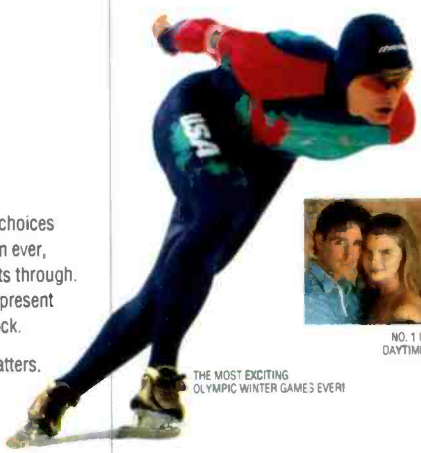
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IKE, ME, AND MY TRUSTY BOLEX

BY DON VOLKMAN

On my very first television film-shooting assignment ever, the night before the 1952 presidential election, it's only a small exaggeration to say I came *that* close to scoring the scoop of the year. And it's not too farfetched a notion to imagine, if that long lost piece of film somehow were to resurface as a segment on one of today's tabloid TV shows, they might hype it something like this:

Coming up next on Inside Copy, *the astounding, long-suppressed story of a murderous election eve assault on General Eisenhower. Now, after forty years of denial and cover-up, newly-discovered eyewitness film graphically shows the horrifying near tragedy. Was it only an incredibly careless blunder? Or was it in actual fact an assassination plot that narrowly missed ...?*

But, hey—let's start this reel all over again from the top. It's a farcical enough story in its bare bones to stand on its own as it really happened.

A year-and-a-half out of Boston University Film School at the time, I was on a straight $50 a week salary at WBZ-TV Boston, working a 9 to 5 shift as something called a "film technician." That meant I spent most of my days cooped up in a small, windowless editing room, cutting feature films down to fit their scheduled time slots and splicing in commercials and stop leaders.

It's a wonder my lungs survived the pollution in that odiferous chamber—a deadly miasma of acetone, carbon tet, cigar smeech and other poisons. The only blessed midday escape was to the screening room down the hall (a converted janitor closet) where there would always be a tall stack of film reels waiting to be screened before airing. Going through blurry network kinescopes and syndicated kid shows tended to be a humdrum chore.

But the big treat for me any day of the week was getting to screen the movie for the next day's "Hollywood Playhouse"—almost always a grade Z howler from Monogram, the only Hollywood studio up to then that had released its films to TV. *Snuffy Smith, Yardbird—The Phantom of Chinatown—Square Dance Kitty—So's Your Aunt Emma*—the titles alone are a tip-off to their trashiness. But a lowbrow movie junkie like me was happy, racking up one of those old Monograms and settling down with my feet up for an hour or so of no-brain pleasure.

Small wonder then that when the producer of our Six O'Clock News came looking for me with a special proposition on the day before the 1952 presidential election, my little Monogram Cinematheque was where he tracked me down.

"Don, do I hear right, that you've got a 16 millimeter camera of your own?" he asked.

I replied that he had heard correctly—a shining new three-lens Bolex, a late replacement for my old $18 prewar Keystone, recently expired.

The producer told me General Eisenhower was coming to the station that night for an election eve TV special, which I already knew and wasn't all that excited about. His pitch to me was: if I brought in my camera and caught a few shots of Ike in our studio, he'd use a piece of it on the next day's news shows, mention my name on the air as the cameraman and reimburse me for the cost of the film.

All the inducement I needed! I saw it as maybe a chance for me to establish my credentials and put in a bid for the job of staff film cameraman—if and when the station ever woke up to the notion that they needed one. We used an occasional local film clip on our news programs back then, and sometimes it would be legitimate hard news—a spectacular four-alarm fire or five-car pileup, caught by and bought from a free-lance stringer. But on our early evening, bank-sponsored newscast, a more typical local film story would be the ceremonial opening of a new supermarket that just happened to be an important client of our bank sponsor.

Anyway, I thanked the producer for the opportunity and assured him I'd be there that night ready for the big event.

Eisenhower and his running mate, Senator Richard Nixon, were to appear first at a giant, early evening political rally at Boston Garden. After that, they would come with their wives to the WBZ-TV studio to participate in a one-hour television spectacular, to be carried on all four networks, including DuMont, plus over a thousand radio stations nationwide.

Affiliate TV stations would be televising local *I Like Ike* rallies in New York, Chicago, and a dozen other major cities across the country, featuring a host of political and show biz celebrities. NBC, the originating network, would switch around in its coverage from one city to another, showing all those superstar Republicans strutting their stuff and whooping it up for Ike and the Party.

According to the scenario, through it all, Ike and Mamie and Dick and Pat would be sitting in cool isolation in our Boston studio. As they watched the hoopla on monitors, WBZ's cameras and mikes would be standing by, ready to switch on to Ike at any time and catch his responses to what he and the entire nation were seeing and hearing together.

When I arrived at the station a half-hour before airtime, the four stars of the show were already in the studio, ensconced in their armchairs, lined up in a neat row, chatting quietly and being whispered to by staff men.

There was a kind of cathedral hush hanging over the scene, with only station personnel and Republican Party functionaries present, all soberly going about their business, briefing the candidates and seeing to their comfort, blocking out camera moves, setting the lights, testing the mikes.

I unlimbered my Bolex and quietly went to work myself, trying to be as unobtrusive as possible. I wasn't about to hassle any of these awesome people with uncouth intrusions like *hey, could you gimme a little show of animated conversation, Senator,* or *how about flashing us that famous grin, General?* I contented myself with tiptoeing around the outer fringes, making do with what film material there was, and that only added up to a half-dozen static shots of the candidates and their ladies sitting still in blank-faced silence.

Then, it was ten minutes to airtime, with everyone in position, poised and ready to go. But hold everything! Eisenhower was asking if there was a clock anywhere in view that he could keep an eye on during the show. No problem, General, he was told. There was a large floor clock on rollers in the studio for just that purpose. They'd wheel it out front and position it between the cameras, directly in his line of sight—*no trouble at all, sir!*

Near desperate by then to catch any bit of action at all, I framed up on the clock and began to shoot as two stagehands started to roll it around behind Eisenhower's chair. It was just at that point when OOPS! Did the wheels hit a cable?—a piece of gaffer tape on the floor?—somebody's foot? Whatever it was, the heavy clock suddenly tilted and pitched forward, landing smack on top of the most famous bald dome in the western world.

The general slumped forward in his chair, grabbing his head with both hands. Mamie jumped up with a cry and leaned over him. Everybody else seemed to be frozen in horror, me included. Rank amateur at the game and normal, feeling human being that I was, I stopped shooting at the instant of impact.

Had I then been the hard-boiled pro that I later became, I'd have kept the camera rolling, ready and eager to do a perfectly framed follow-swing downward and zoom-in to closeup as the stricken general slid to the floor.

In big time news and documentary filming, the first and only rule of the game, they tell you, is *get the pictures!* No matter what pandemonium, mayhem and destruction are going on all around you—screams of terror, pitiful cries for help—you are not there to lend aid and comfort, rescue the perishing, divert the floodtide of history or meddle with the Almighty's cosmic plan. Your job, Buster, is to keep that camera aimed and rolling!

But by the time I came out of my stupor and remembered to switch on again, the crisis was over. As it turned out, there was no real harm done to the general after all. Only a minor abrasion and trickle of blood was showing at the point of impact. Somebody came scurrying in with a gauze pad and bottle of mercurochrome, and I did catch a good tight million dollar closeup of Ike's wounded pate being swabbed and daubed.

But hold on, you say—where the hell was the Secret Service while all this was going on? If anybody bopped a presidential candidate today with so much as an errant yoyo, the next instant there'd be six Secret Service men wrestling him to the floor. And six more of the candidate's personal bodyguards with drawn guns, ordering everybody to freeze.

No no, kiddies, this is a different time we're talking about, a different America. Sweet, innocent early '50's America. Norman Rockwell America—Patti Page and Perry Como America—I Like Ike America—What, me worry?—America.

Before Dallas, there hadn't been a presidential assassination since McKinley. And it wasn't until after the Robert Kennedy shooting that anybody even thought about special protection for presidential candidates.

So to all of us there, Ike's head-bashing passed as nothing more sinister than a dumb little goof-up. No heavier response aroused than a general chorus of "*phews*" and "holy cow's," shudders of disbelief, sheepish apologies, a lame Purple Heart joke or two and nervous laughs all around.

Next day, though, it must have got big laughs when it came out in the newspapers, wouldn't you think? No, it never got a chuckle, because there wasn't a word about it in the next day's papers, local or national. And to the best of my knowledge not a word of it has ever appeared in print since.

What?—the reporters on the scene didn't mention it in their stories? What reporters? There were none there to report it. The entire press corps, local and national, had been out in force at the Boston Garden earlier in the evening to cover Ike's major speech at the rally. But what further news value was there in Ike sitting around idle in a TV studio?

Ah, but what about my film though, such as it was? That at least ought to have put the word out and stirred up some excitement when it ran on the WBZ news shows next day, and was picked up by NBC and maybe even the other networks. So naturally, I dashed around next morning to get my film quick-processed and back to the station in time for the Noon News. Instead of hoorahs for my big scoop, what I got was this: "Oh you did catch it on film, huh? Hey, that's really unbelievable! Nice work, Don. But uh—look. Ha ha. The thing is, there's no way we could actually use it, you know? You see what I mean—it would make us look like some kind of a horse's ass, to let the stupid thing happen in the first place, and then go on the air and what?—brag about it?—laugh about it?

"*Forget* about it, man, that's what we do. Hey, don't worry though, we'll cover your expenses on it regardless. And we'll keep the film for the—uh—for the files, okay? Ha ha. Thanks for all your trouble and sorry about it, really."

Disappointment? Yes, but after I cooled off and brooded about it, it all made good sense. The only question was, how could I ever have been such a fool as to believe WBZ *would* run it on the air? Are you kidding? Broadcast to the whole world that they'd dropped a fifty pound clock on General Eisenhower?

So there is was—my first news filming assignment gone swirling right down the old hopper. But at least I'd been present at a small episode in history, and closeup to two presidents to be. Of course, I was glad General Eisenhower had not been seriously hurt. After coming all the way through World War II unscathed, he deserved a better fate than being knocked cuckoo by a clock. ■

In many post-Ike years as a filmmaker, Don Volkman has had some real scoops, and produced some outstanding documentaries.

NBC NIGHT SHIFT

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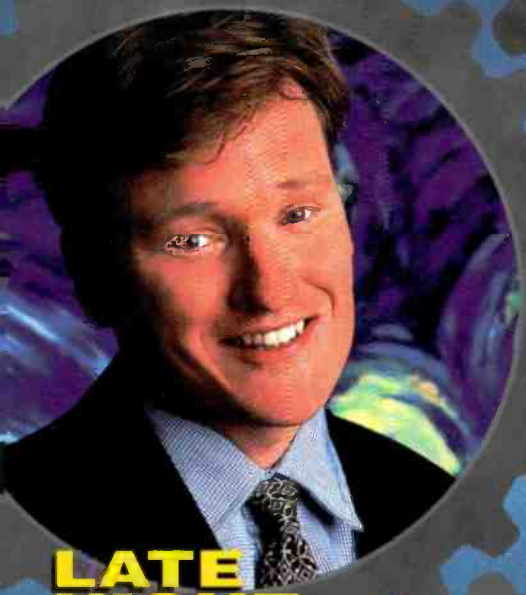
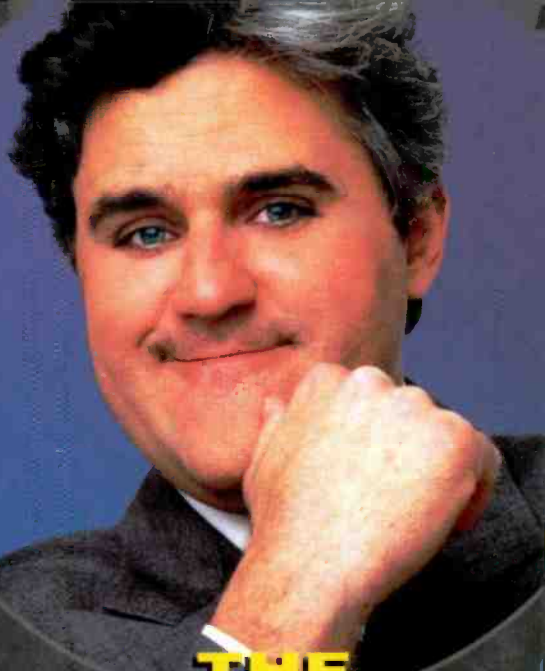


LATE NIGHT With Conan O'Brien

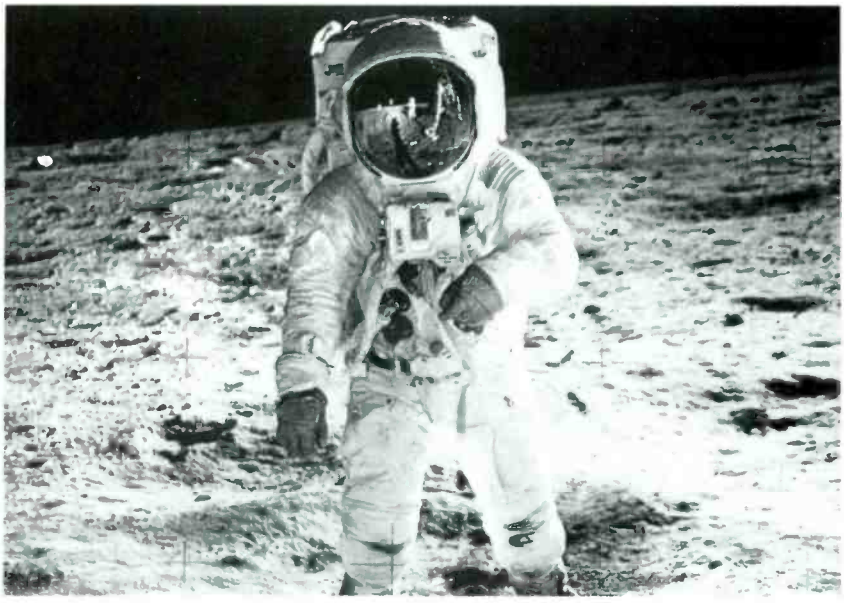


THE TONIGHT SHOW With Jay Leno

LATER With Greg Kinnear

NBC

1991-1992 Engineering Award for Outstanding Achievement in Technological Development



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CREATING CRITICAL VIEWERS

A new kind of course for High School students shows them how to understand television and to make better use of its information.

BY DOROTHY G. SINGER

"Like the sorcerers of old, the television set casts its magic spell, freezing speech and actions and turning the living into silent statues so long as the enchantment lasts."

—Uri Bronfenbrenner

Unlike Professor Bronfenbrenner, I believe that television has the power to educate and entertain. With the help from classroom teachers, we can break the television set's magic spell and turn our students into active, alert, critical viewers. Under the auspices of the Pacific Mountain Network and the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, The Yale University Family Television Research and Consultation Center developed a curriculum in the form of a workbook, "Creating Television Viewers", for high school students to help them understand the intricacies of the television industry with special emphasis on the content they view each day.

I remember back before the TV age when my teacher taught my fifth grade classmates how to understand the different components of a newspaper. We had to learn about editorials, special features, ads, the sports and the financial sections and most important, the essentials of a news item (who, what, where, when). We knew what a masthead was, and, even what the obituary page meant. We learned that we could write letters to the editor, and longed to see our names in print. But, unfortunately, when television appeared on the scene, educators underemphasized the impact of this new medium and rarely, if ever, did teachers teach their pupils how to understand this new technological advancement.

Finally, in the 1970s, there were the beginnings of TV courses sprouting around the country. At Yale, we were

among these early pioneers in television curricula development and prepared teachers' manuals and videos for K through sixth grade, and now in the 1990s completed the manual for middle and high school students.

Far from being the so-called "latency period," the phase of puberty and early adolescence in children may be of great importance in the development of internalized socialization through imagination about possible social and sex roles, career choices, adventure and romance. The television medium now provides a major source of content and structure for children's knowledge, beliefs and future world experience. The average American Family watches approximately seven hours of television a day.

The schools, like the family, can play a central role in teaching students to make sense of the enormous amount of information derived from television each day. There is a precedent for teaching about television in the schools.

As one researcher stated, "For the first time in human history a centralized commercial institution rather than parents, church or school tells most of the stories most of the time" (Nancy Signorielli). If indeed, television is the story-teller, shaping our attitudes and beliefs, it behooves the families, through mediation and explanation, and through control of their children's viewing habits, to help curb some of the negative influences of violent and gratuitous sexual content portrayed on television.

The schools, like the family, can play a central role in teaching students to make sense of the enormous amount of information derived from television each day. There is a precedent for teaching about television in the schools. To counteract the risks of substance abuse and conduct disorder development, many schools are increasingly building in prevention programs as part of their social studies and health curricula. Some schools have recognized the importance of video presentations to provide training in social competence skills. There are advantages in such techniques because students can readily identify with the characters on the videos, and the teacher can use guides and relevant instructional material as follow-up devices.

Success with TV programs like *Degrassi Junior High* used in schools along with teacher guides and discussion has been cited in one of our studies conducted at Yale. In addition, the afternoon specials on the networks directed at young teenagers have been an important source for information about alcoholism, incest, homosexuality, handicaps, and cultural differences, among other topics. In our research of such programs targeted at adolescents, we found that the *discussion* of the content by teachers and students immediately following the presentation helped to clarify the important social issues for the viewers and led to increased comprehension of the content.

I would like to briefly summarize the ten lessons and highlight some of the objectives of the "Creating Critical Viewers" workbook and suggest that use of such an approach could perhaps help prevent some of the distortions and disastrous events that have occurred because of television's influence. The most recent case reported in *The New York Times*, October 10, 1993, of a 5-year-old

boy who started a fire that killed his younger sister implicated the MTV cartoon *Beavis and Butt-head* because the characters promote burning as fun. Older children have also been involved in crimes related to television.

Two famous cases —Ronald Zamora, the 15-year-old who killed his next door neighbor because of his identification with Kojak, and Olivia Niemi, the 9-year-old who was artificially raped by four older children who had been influenced by a television movie, *Born Innocent*— received much publicity because of the television connection. The jury found Zamora guilty of murder, seemingly rejecting the attorney's claim that television was an "accessory of the crime." In the Niemi case, NBC argued that the program did not advocate or intend to incite rape and claimed the First Amendment as their major argument, suggesting dangers of infringing on these rights.

In all such TV-related cases it would be simplistic to blame television as the sole cause for such anti-social behavior, but certainly, we must accept the fact that if television can influence our purchase of products, and style of dress, our verbal expressions, to name just a few areas, it is not difficult to believe that some people may also be influenced in a negative manner.

Thus, one of our most important lessons is to help students differentiate between which parts of a program are real or pretend, and to be able to discriminate between the different elements of reality and fantasy. I remember when *Miami Vice* was on the networks and an actual crime had taken place in Florida. The police had cordoned off the crime area, but many people still tried to approach asking,"Isn't this a scene from *Miami Vice*? Aren't they filming here?" These adults were having difficulty recognizing that a real crime was in progress and that this was not a scene from one of their favorite TV programs.

The first part of the curriculum is devoted to consciousness-raising on the part of the students. An assignment, for example, asks the students to keep a TV diary to determine which programs they watch and the number of hours they watch TV. Questions in the classroom touch on the kinds of programs the students favor, the influence of TV on their lives, whether they discuss TV with their friends or parents, whether they use guides to help select programs, and to determine other media usage including video rentals, audiotapes, newspapers, or books. Other lessons aim to help students understand how many different people are involved in a television production, the various career opportunities available in the industry, and the numerous types of programs presented on TV such as dramas, situation comedies, sports, docudramas, variety shows, talk shows, educational programs and game shows.

Action, aggression and violence are also discussed. Can students explore alternative ways of personal problem-solving without aggression and consider ways in which adventure and action can be entertaining without depicting so many acts of violence?

All lessons contain objectives, background information about the topic, suggestions to the teacher for presentation of the lesson including ideas for class discussion and class projects, a glossary of key words used in the

lesson, reference materials related to the particular lesson, and finally, a homework section for students to complete at home alone with their parents.

A lesson in the workbook deals with helping students understand the nature of commercials on television—direct and indirect messages, the use of lighting, camera effects and music to enhance a products' image, and the differences between paid commercials, public service announcements and political messages. Action, aggression and violence also are discussed. Can students explore alternative ways of personal problem-solving without aggression, and consider ways in which adventure and action can be entertaining without depicting so many acts of violence? Do we understand the consequences of an act of violence or aggression?

There are other lessons concerning the news, stereotypes, ethics and morality, health issues and safety, and how television can promote a clean environment. The appendix includes some facts about the technical aspects of television and how the picture actually comes to a home.

In order to assess the utilization of the curriculum workbook, we carried out a survey with the help of Pacific Mountain Network (PMN). PMN sent out 600 questionnaires in two mailings. Our response rate was about 10% (58 returned), the typical rate for a written survey. Respondents were teachers in high schools who had received the materials from PMN. Chapters in the workbook were rated on a 4-point scale; 1=not useful, 2=somewhat useful, 3=very useful, 4=did not use.

Results indicate that most of the ten chapters received ratings from 2.41 to 2.83, suggesting that the teachers found the lessons more than somewhat useful. Of those teachers who utilized the workbook, 52% used it as part of the school curriculum with English, Social Studies and Language Arts as the most cited classes. Some teachers involved parents in the curriculum (22%). Only a small number of respondents (16%) utilized a videotape that PMN had also made available to accompany the workbook. Unfortunately, many of the schools did not know about the videotape—which suggests that the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences may want to publicize this part of the curriculum.

Teachers were asked to assess their students' reactions to both the workbook and videotape. In general, reaction was positive with students favoring the videotape slightly more than the workbook, but not significantly so. Interestingly, some of the suggestions called for more "production and technical" emphasis than offered in the lessons. Overall, comments were favorable from the respondents with remarks such as, "excellent idea," "a super supplementary resource," and "helpful in teaching our students to be more discerning viewers."

Many of the respondents stated that they received their materials *after* the survey deadline ended. We do feel that there needs to be a more concerted effort made to get these materials out to the teachers themselves—not to superintendents' offices where such materials are often left unopened or are not distributed to the appropriate and interested teachers.

Our personal experience is positive whenever we present the workbook at professional meetings such as the recent American Psychological Association in Toronto, or at the television conference sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services in Washington, DC in October of 1992. Under the auspices of the Philadelphia Board of Education, a Faculty Meeting of the Air, "Critical viewing Skills" was presented live in New

York, Dallas, and the District of Columbia from Philadelphia this past October. The curriculum was the featured topic of the program, and this format involving simultaneous broadcast suggests the importance of an expansion of distance learning through the new technologies. In November, the curriculum was presented in Texas at the University of Houston's conference on "Youth, School, and Media Violence."

Both my husband, Jerome Singer, and I are frequent presenters at PTA meetings and at local, state and national conferences related to the media. Our approach to television is a positive one. Television is here to stay, part of our everyday life. Why not learn to control it and educate our young people to reflectively evaluate content and test it against other forms of information, to learn how to make inferences and draw appropriate conclusions.

With the tools of critical thinking in hand, I truly believe that students can use television as a teacher. Without such an active stance, television can be the "vast wasteland" that Newton Minow envisioned in 1961. Thirty years later, in 1991, this former head of the FCC worried that his "grandchildren would actually be harmed" by television. I hope that the adoption of the "Creating Critical Viewers" workbook in the classroom will be one approach that will help mitigate such harm. ■

Dorothy Singer is co-author with her husband Jerome L. Singer of *Creating Critical Viewers*, the NATAS-sponsored project she describes in this article. A professor of Yale University, she is also co-director of its Family Television Research and Consultation Center. Her most recent book is *Playing For Their Lives*, published by the Free Press.

"QUOTE UNQUOTE"

Not for Real

"In the last half century a larger and larger proportion of our experience, of what we read and see and hear, has come to consist of pseudo-events. We expect more of them and we are given more of them. They flood our consciousness. Their multiplication has gone on in the United States at a faster rate than elsewhere. Even the rate of increase is increasing every day. This is true of the world of education, of consumption, and of personal relations. It is especially true of the world of public affairs ... "

—Daniel J. Boorstin,
The Image,
Atheneum Publishers,
New York, 1962.

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MIRA! IN MANHATTAN

A group of nuns organizes to change outdated and stereotyped portrayals of their sisters. They get together with broadcasters to ground *The Flying Nun* and *The Bells of St. Mary's* sort of type casting and to promote more realistic religious awareness.

BY CAMILLE D'ARIENZO

In the middle of the media metropolis know as Manhattan a half dozen nuns have begun meeting with writers and broadcasters to invite them to take a closer look at the thousands of sisters they represent. They are speaking for generations of vowed religious women around the world who care for men, women and children suffering from poverty, sickness, ignorance and myriad oppressions. Like their longago founders, inspired by love of God, they minister in hospitals, hospices, residential treatment centers, orphanages, schools, social service agencies, in slums and universities, in prisons and pre-school, in shelters and soup kitchens. A few spend their lives behind cloistered walls; many use their prayer as a propellant into arenas where angels fear to tread.

They are more than the stereotypical ruler-wielding classroom generals that draw knowing laughter between even the most congenial of television personalities. One such exchange transpired between Harry Smith and Charles Osgood on Columbus Day, 1993. With a throwaway comment, both chuckled in agreement that the latter's knowledge of Columbus was attributable to the rigors of the ruler. If, in fact, one or more of his sister-teachers did exercise such regrettable disciplinary behavior, it is indisputable that they nevertheless managed to find ways to impart to the uniquely eloquent CBS Commentator at least a portion of the literary and verbal skills that have helped Osgood become the outstanding success that he is. One of the most amiable and best loved of his genre, he may have learned from the nuns who taught him the confidence and spirit that contributes to his general excellence.

Sisters tuned into the Columbus Day banter did not infer malice or bitterness but couldn't help feeling

disappointed. Their concern with such seemingly harmless stereotyping is that it nurtures negative associations, displacing positive ones, that it dismisses sisters as irrelevant and that it discourages the consideration of religious life as a viable alternative vocational choice for today's Catholic professional woman.

At least one of the Columbus Day viewers was a member of that emerging group of sisters in dialogue with media professionals. They identify their effort by an acronym, MIRA. In Spanish, Mira! means Look! The long form, M-I-R-A conveys the sisters' interest: Media Images and Religious Awareness.

The sisters involved in this project, for the most part, do not fault media professionals with bias or bigotry. They are comfortable with the findings of a recent study that has concluded that a "chasm of misunderstanding" exists between members of the media and religious leaders in the United States. According to *New York Times* religion editor Peter Steinfels, the study, sponsored by the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University, maintains that reporters are uninformed and sometimes intellectually lazy, but not anti-religious. ("Study Says Misunderstanding Exists Between Clergy and the News Media," September 8, 1993) Religious figures, on the other hand, don't make the job easier. They withhold information for fear of being misunderstood and misrepresented.

The sisters of MIRA! know, moreover, that to those outside the Catholic tradition, their lifestyle is in many ways a mystery. This is at least partially because of their commitment of celibacy. They realize, too, that their religious jargon can be perplexing to outsiders and that religious women haven't taken the time to share common concerns and values with those whose work it is to report them.

Nevertheless, they are convinced that today's sisters have as much to give as they have to gain in the exchanges now underway. While organized religion may hold diminished appeal, there is widespread reliable evidence of an emergent spiritual hunger in society at large. Sisters know quite a bit about that subject, as well as about their professional areas.

Unfortunately, nuns, it seems, are taken most seriously when they die because of what they believe and do. The most expansive media coverage in recent years occurred when four churchwomen—three nuns and one laywoman—were murdered in El Salvador in 1980. Their names—Sisters Ita Ford, Maura Clark, Dorothy Kazel and Miss Jean Donovan—became a rallying cry for justice among church people who never before had thought to challenge governments. Several dramatic, political factors made their murders newsworthy.

There was no question about their commitment to the impoverished, persecuted peasants. The death threats started when it became known that their letters to friends and relatives in the states were critical of U.S. support of the oppressive military regime that governed El Salvador. Witnesses testified that the nuns' rapists and assassins were soldiers in civilian dress; moreover, it was firmly believed by all parties close to the case, that the order to execute the women came from Washington.

60 Minutes ran several excellent segments on the murders and their aftermath, as did other news and public affairs programs. Newspaper articles abounded and Donahue devoted a program to the issue. A made for television movie, *Roses in December* ran on network television.

The sisters who created MIRA! (Sisters of Charity Irene Fugazy and Mary Ellen McGovern; Maryknoll

Sisters Janice McLaughlin and Sandy Gallazin; and Sisters of Mercy Rosemary Jeffries and the author) don't think sisters should have to die to get coverage.

Their contention is that many who gather and create the stories for the general public are either unaware of or uncomfortable with the reality of today's sisters. Those who present stories about today's nuns often filter them through memories of *The Bells of St. Mary's*, *The Sound of Music*, the sister sleuth in the *Father Dowling Mysteries* or *The Flying Nun*. These portrayals, however improbable, are at least benign.

The Flying Nun, according to Sally Fields, was the only nun known to many of my classmates when I entered the master's program in television and radio at the University of Michigan in 1966, wearing the full habit of the Sisters of Mercy. While I never approached her record for being either cute or able to fly without help of a major airline, I think people thought me less formidable because of the television hours spent with *The Flying Nun*.

Many who gather and create the stories for the general public are either unaware of, or uncomfortable with, the realities of today's sisters. Those who present stories about today's nuns often filter them through memories of The Bells of St. Mary's, The Sound of Music, or The Flying Nun.

Attraction for the traditional habit endures among reporters who have never worn it. Even when covering the most contemporary of today's active nuns, they cast about for a sister, any sister, in a traditional habit—another example of Window Dressing On the Set.

In an article published in the Catholic newsmagazine, *America*, Sister Rosemary Jeffries recounted a scenario played out with a reporter in her community headquarters in New Jersey.

"He asked the typical questions," she wrote, "When did the sisters rise? What time did they go to chapel? to meals? to work? I shared the schedule and gladly made arrangements for him to cover the main events of the day. Then he sheepishly inquired if I could also make sure there were 'real nuns' around for the pictures. He explained that he was looking for 'the habited and veiled holy looking nun that everyone would recognize.'"

Like Whoopi Coldberg? The ads and commercials showing her so clad established early on the appeal for *Sister Act* that became a box office bonanza and a video treasure. It capitalized on nostalgia and humor and offered a sympathetic insight into sisters who were trapped between two worlds—those of the isolated contemplative and the service-oriented activist.

New York Times film critic Caryn James began her review of *Sister Act* ("Movies Turn Convent Life Upside Down," June 7, 1992) with this observation:

"Some of us are suckers for nun jokes: they're cheap, they're easy, they're irresistible."

A product of Catholic School education, Ms. James suggests that it's helpful, though not necessary, to have had first hand experience. She defines "the two basic categories of nun humor: sister as unworldly innocent and sister as repressed storm trooper." The first category, she admits, is cherished by good Catholics and non-

Catholics alike, while the storm trooper category delights lapsed Catholics and others unfriendly to Catholic values. "*Sister Act*," she says, "is one long, sugary nun joke."

There are times, however, when even the sugar is in short supply. A recent *Murphy Brown* episode (Nov. 22, 1993) had Murphy exploring the meaning of death in preparation for the time when her little boy might ask her to explain it. She seeks counsel from her best friend at the station.

He, a confessed Catholic school graduate, attributes his belief in an afterlife—heaven, hell, purgatory and limbo—to a Sister Michael with mighty muscles. Hellfire, he claims to have learned, would be his fate for watching a classmate change into her gym togs. Such voyeurism, he says, would be an evil on a par with war and murder. This fits neatly into Caryn James' observation about "cheap" nun jokes.

The humor in this episode is quite different from that in *Sister Act*. Charles W. Bell, longtime religion editor for the *New York Daily News*, saw that film at a preview for nuns. After the movie, he asked about 15 of them, separately, what part of *Sister Act* they most enjoyed. Every one without exception cited the same sequence. It was in the casino where all were risking their lives to protect Whoopi Goldberg, a crime witness who'd taken refuge in a convent and had bonded with the nuns. That response appears an indication of the sisterly solidarity that flourishes among women religious.

Charles Bell shared his observations at a MIRA! seminar held September twenty-third.

Peter Feuerherd, a news writer also present at the seminar, alluded to the Whoopi Goldberg connection in a follow-up article in *The Long Island Catholic* (Sept. 25, 1993). Summarizing the contention of MIRA's organizers, he wrote:

"Whoopi Goldberg in *Sister Act* was funny and appealing. But simple-minded nuns in full habit who can't carry a tune and need help from Las Vegas lounge singers to discover how the real world works are not the full story of the American Sister."

In the theater, *Nunsense*, a long-running comedy about life, and more importantly death, in an impoverished convent, has been well received by many sisters. In fact, several congregations have themselves taken part in community productions as a fund-raising exercise. New York audiences have been friendly, enjoying the humor and celebrating the nostalgia.

Some relatively few sisters, however, have been pained by the recalling of memories of a long-ago convent life in which adult women were trained to behave like children, and in which all authority was hierarchical. The sisters who object to this portrayal remember too well when fiction was fact.

In fact, were those stories given fair play, many would hold little dramatic interest. Others, however, would offer vibrant possibilities, not only for news and public affairs programs, but also for plots and sub-plots in dramatic series and made-for-TV movies.

The vast range of possibilities is suggested by the life and works of two Teresas—Mother Teresa and Sister Theresa Kane. Everyone knows the Mother Teresa, who cares for the dying in the streets of Calcutta and who has established a religious congregation to serve the poor in other places. She is one of the most revered and admired women alive, as evidenced by polls taken and awards conferred. In her distinctive religious habit, she's a living saint to people of all faiths.

Her ministry to world's outcasts has touched a spark in young and old, devout and non-religious. Her goodness is genuine and dramatic. A

native of Bulgaria, she embodies traditional European values. Fiercely loyal to the pope, she never publicly questions his policies. And, consistent with her respect for authority, she doesn't confront the systems which oppress the poor. For media purposes, her character and commitment are uncomplicated.

Sister Theresa Kane is a former president of her regional community, the New York Sisters of Mercy, and past president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR). In that position, she was a revered inspiration to the majority of this nation's sisters, whom she officially represented. Many of her constituents serve people who are poor and abandoned, as do Mother Teresa's. Theresa Kane's mission includes, however, an attention to systemic change—to exposing and challenging unjust structures whose policies affect the poor and, indeed, often create them. Perhaps the following analogy will indicate the difference, not in commitment, but in approach.

Envision, if you will, the two Teresas walking through a quiet village. All of a sudden, there's the sound of a machine gun. Victims fall in the streets. Mother Teresa, ignoring danger, runs to aid the wounded. Sister Theresa, ignoring danger, determines where the gunman is, and rushes to confront him to make him stop firing on the innocent. Which Teresa is behaving more "religiously?"

It was her public confrontation with systemic injustice that catapulted Sister Theresa Kane into media consciousness in 1979. She had tried for months without success to meet with Pope John Paul II in behalf of the LCWR to urge him to recognize the gifts of women and to end the discrimination that excludes them from equal opportunities for priestly service in the Church. When he visited the United States in the fall of 1979, she rose in the Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Washington and respectfully read her prepared statement. Sister Theresa, who attended the MIRA! seminar, said, "The response was instantaneous." It included hate mail and letters of support from all over the world. Unlike the other Teresa who has enjoyed uniform, positive press, Theresa Kane's reception has been mixed. She is heroine and villain, depending on one's view of the holy.

Sister Theresa said her challenge to the pope generated widespread interest because "it shattered a conventional image of nuns as passive and docile." Charles Bell, religion editor for *The New York Daily News* was present in the cathedral. He recalled that her statement sent shock waves through the press gallery covering the event that day.

Sister Theresa said that the general media generally treated her well during her moment in the public eye. The Catholic press was more critical. She said of the coverage:

"It was generally accurate and fair. But none of us is without our bias, either in personal philosophy or through our employer," she said, adding that in this case "the media didn't do the distorting; the viewers and readers did that."

Apart from the internal perception, there is also the visual image. Mother Teresa's recognizable religious habit is laden with more symbolic meaning than Sister Theresa's conservative suit. There can be little argument that the dress worn by the foundresses of religious orders more than a hundred years ago, would set today's sisters apart.

Media professionals at MIRA's conference responded enthusiastically, many expressing willingness to help by offering advice and providing opportunities available to them.

Margot Adler of National Public Radio sympathized with the media's

difficulty in dealing with religious experience. She said that most religion coverage focuses on "power politics."

Bill Baker, president of public TV station WNET in New York City, praised nuns as being the most vibrant and committed of religious people; however, he said they were "too nice" to pursue legitimate demands for coverage. He said that "the anger of Catholic women swelling up" was a good subject for television and that the role of sisters in the Catholic Church provides a good peg, attractive to journalists.

Other participants recommended that sisters invite media representatives to observe their work with the poor, especially where there is danger and conflict. They suggested that sites of sisters' ministries be clearly identified. Participants debated the value of hiring a public relations firm, of developing a "corporate" image and one suggested that sisters pay a visit to local TV stations, many of whom are up for license renewal.

The sisters who started MIRA! would find helpful some continuing conversation with writers and broadcasters. They are convinced that they could play a role as consultants, especially with regard to storylines involving nuns.

Perhaps such sensitivity would prove contagious.

There is, admittedly, a final consideration within this effort. After decades of nun jokes and assorted verbal cruelties, one would like to say clearly and directly: Cheap shots are just not fair. That conviction was the basis of my response to an article published last summer. I'll conclude by reconstructing the exchange.

A first person article in the Home Section of *The New York Times* caught my attention. Ann Lamott, a mother, unmarried by choice, made a denigrating remark about nuns. ("Single but Mothers by Choice: When Going It Alone Turns Out to Be Not So Alone at All," Aug. 5, 1993). She contrasted her personal experience of single motherhood with yesteryear's pregnant. They, she said, were entrusted to "glowering nuns" who cared for "all those fast girls in the 50's and 60's one read about in 'Dear Abby,' who got knocked up and had to go to special homes to have their babies."

She doesn't allege personal experience of the glowerers. It's possible, though unspecified that she heard second-hand of such glowerers. It is more likely that her reference was a gratuitous swipe at thousands of nuns who, on their record of compassionate care and outstanding social services, deserve better.

I first visited such a shelter, a safe house, as a high school senior eager to do some volunteer work in what I thought would be a gloomy place. The Sisters of Mercy I met at Angel Guardian Home in Brooklyn were more "glowing" than "glowering." Their warmth and humor were among the qualities that inspired me to join them.

Why should anyone care that I reacted so passionately to Ann Lamott's cavalier use of a single adjective? She is a single mother. I am a member of a religious order. We share a desire to protect what we love from what hurts, or denigrates, or limits, or simply is not fair.

MIRA! understands this concern. ■

Camille D'Arienzo received her M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. She spent four years as a producer/writer/teacher of educational television programs for the Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn during the 1960's. From 1973 to 1993, she taught at Brooklyn College in the department of television and film, with occasional semesters as visiting professor at The University of Michigan. Recently, she assumed presidency of the Brooklyn Regional Community of the Sisters of Mercy. She continues to write and lecture and to broadcast weekly commentaries on WINS Radio, New York.

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KEN BURN'S AMERICAN DREAM: HISTORIES-FOR-TV FROM WALPOLE, NEW HAMPSHIRE

BY GARY EDGERTON

Ken Burns laughs now about the apprehension he felt on September 23, 1990, the day *The Civil War* premiered on prime-time television and changed his life forever. He had just completed a two-month promotional tour, a grueling process at which he is particularly adept, being a talented storyteller and eminently quotable. He checked out of a midtown Manhattan hotel on what was a Sunday morning, beginning the long drive back to his home in Walpole, New Hampshire. Suddenly seized with misgivings, he remembers thinking long and hard about the remarks of several reviewers who predicted that *The Civil War* would be "eaten alive," going head-to-head with network programming over five consecutive nights during the opening of a new commercial season.

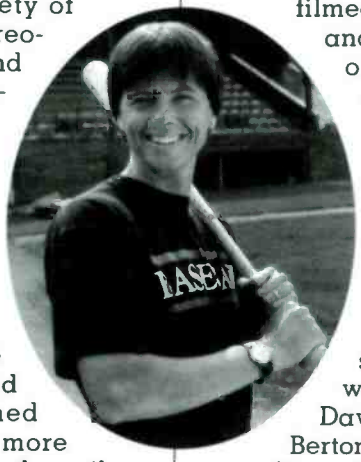
That evening, he and his wife, Amy Stechler Burns, were "completely unprepared for what was going to happen" next, as the first episode attracted 14 million viewers, eventually reaching more than 39 million by Thursday, the largest audience for a public television series ever. Ken admits, "I was flabbergasted! I still sort of pinch myself about it. It's one of those rare instances in which something helped stitch the country together, however briefly, and the fact that I had a part in that is just tremendously satisfying."

So much about Ken Burn's career defies the conventional wisdom. He is one of public television's busiest and most celebrated producers in an era when the historical documentary generally holds little interest for most Americans. He operates his own independent company, Florentine Films, in a small New England village more than four hours north of New York City, hardly a crossroads in the highly competitive and often insular world of corporately funded, PBS-sponsored productions.

His major PBS specials so far—*The Brooklyn Bridge* (1982), *The Shakers: Hands to Work, Hearts to God* (1985), *The Statue of Liberty* (1985), *Huey*

Long (1986), *The Civil War* (1990), and *Empire of the Air* (1992)—are also strikingly out of step with the visual pyrotechnics and frenetic pacing of most nonfiction television, relying mainly on documentary techniques that were introduced decades ago. However, Burns reintegrates these more traditional elements of film form into a new and compelling style all his own.

Ken Burns's work is best known for its "still-in-motion" cinematography which integrates a variety of single images— daguerreotypes, prints, paintings, and especially photographs— as the primary source material in his historical documentaries. This visual strategy actually dates back to 1940, being first employed with distinction by Swiss director Curt Oertel in *Michelangelo* (retitled *The Titan* in the United States)who lovingly filmed many of Michelangelo's more famous paintings, such as the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, along with his many landmark creations in architecture and sculpture.



Despite Oertel's work, "still-in-motion" filming continued to be under utilized through the mid-1950s, due to the mistaken notion that this kind of imagery was inherently uncinematic and thus irrelevant to the needs and consideration of most documentarists.

Television, in fact, became a proving ground for the eventual realization of the "still-in-motion" technique. Sponsorship for compilation documentaries increased after NBC's critical and popular success, *Victory at Sea* (1952-53), a 26-part series on the U.S. Navy during World War II which was produced by Henry "Pete" Salomon and featured nearly 13 hours of archival film. Salomon and his Project 20 Unit specialized in tackling twentieth-century historical topics, such as *The Great War* (NBC, 1956) and *The Jazz Age* (NBC, 1957) through the use of stock footage, only resorting to photographs when motion pictures were completely unavailable.

Everything changed with the release of Colin Low and Wolf Koenig's *City of Gold* (CBC, 1957), a Canadian Film Board production chronicling the rise and fall of Dawson City in northwest Canada during the legendary Klondike Gold Rush of the 1890s. Besides short filmed scenes at the beginning and end, the 23-minute *City of Gold* is composed mainly of 200 black-and-white stills, rephotographed from an animation stand to reveal one moving detail after another, and sequenced dramatically to accompany period music and a spoken narration by writer and one-time Dawson City resident, Pierre Berton.

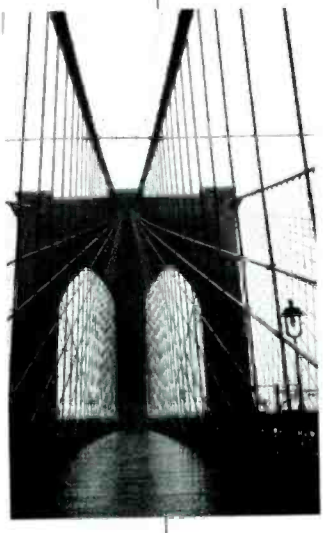
City of Gold was immediately recognized as a stylistic breakthrough, winning many honors including an Academy Award, and spurring other documentarists to incorporate "still-in-motion" cinematography into their film-making repertoire.

The producer-director who best fulfilled the promise of "still-in-motion" dramatization prior to Ken Burns was Donald Hyatt, Henry Salomon's assistant and eventual successor at Project 20. When Salomon died in 1957, Hyatt continued making compilation documentaries, shifting Project 20's attention more in the direction of nineteenth-century themes, such as *Meet Mr. Lincoln* (NBC, 1959) and *Mark Twain's America* (NBC, 1960), each of which contained several hundred photographs, prints, and paintings in the recounting of these historical subjects.

Hyatt's crowning achievement was

General Motors/ Al Levine

The Real West (NBC, 1961), which garnered a 42 share in its initial broadcast, and eventually won fifteen national and international awards, including the coveted Premio d'Italia for best documentary in 1961. Don Hyatt, along with Daniel Jones and his research staff, examined more than 10,000 photographs, while Philip Reisman, Jr. wrote a lively and entertaining account, peppering a narration filled with stereotyped conflicts (gunfights, cowboys versus Indians) and predictable personalities (Billy the Kid, George Armstrong Custer) with an occasional reminiscence from "those who wested."



In hindsight, Hyatt's piece is more romance than history, although his close fusion of sound and picture effectively weaves the spoken word, delivered by Gary Cooper, and a period score by Robert Russell Bennett, with over four hundred black-and-white photographs and paintings, thus telling a 52-minute story largely through "stills-in-motion.,"

The stylistic contributions of Oertel, Low, Koening, and Hyatt were often imitated after Hyatt's last major effort, *End of the Trail* (1965) on the American Indian, usually in minor scenes where "photographs-in-motion" became a well-worn cliche for evoking a bygone era in literally dozens of documentaries as well as fiction films, such as *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969) and *Days of Heaven* (1978).

Eventually, Ken Burns eclipsed his documentary predecessors, however, by his historical rigor and reasoning, the scope of his productions, and the formal complexity of his "still-in-motion" filming. His growing mastery as a filmmaker-historian propelled this technique to new heights in the 1980s, as in *The Civil War*, when he incorporated more than 3,000 stills into an 11-hour film to portray the most complex event in the nation's history with a depth of understanding unsurpassed by any other historical documentary on the subject.

As usual, Burn's approach was multifaceted, attending to the "Great Men" of the war, together with scores of African-Americans, women, laborers, farmers, and especially first-hand accounts by two common soldiers, Elisha Hunt Rhodes, a Yankee from Rhode Island, and Sam Watkins, a Confederate from Tennessee.

In his own words, "I try to engage, on literally dozens of levels, ordinary human beings from across the country—male and female, black and white, young and old, rich and poor, inarticulate and articulate."

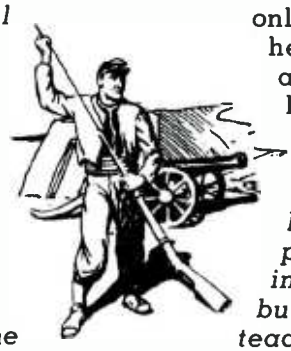
Ken Burns has likewise perfected a wholly new and highly complex textual arrangement which harmoniously combines "still-in-motion" cinematography with an even greater number of technical elements than had ever been attempted, or even envisioned before him. Beginning with *The Brooklyn Bridge* and continuing through *Empire of the Air*, his distinctive style blends narration with what he calls his "chorus of voices," meaning readings from personal papers, diaries, and letters; interpretive commentaries from on-screen experts, usually historians; his "rephotographing" technique which closely examines old photographs, paintings, drawings, and other artifacts with his movie camera.

All these elements are backed up with sound effects and a musical track that features period compositions and folk music. This collage of techniques creates the illusion that the viewer is being transported back in time, liter-

ally finding an emotional connection with the people and events of America's past.

More than anyone before him, Ken Burn's work is the standard for producing history-for-television. He is clearly an accomplished historian in his own right. For example, he spent five years researching and refining his thinking on *The Civil War*, along with employing 24 prominent historians as consultants on the project. Burns is the only filmmaker ever inducted into the select 250-member Society of American Historians, a singularly unique recognition which confirms the quality of his films as history. When I spoke with Ken recently, he explained his dual position as a documentarist and popular historian.

"I think I'm primarily a filmmaker. That's my job. I'm an amateur historian at best, but more than anything if you wanted to find a hybridization of those two professions, then I find myself an emotional archeologist. That is to say, there is something in the process of filmmaking that I do in the excavation of these events in the past that provokes a kind of emotion and a sympathy that remind us, for example, of why we agree against all odds as a people to cohere.



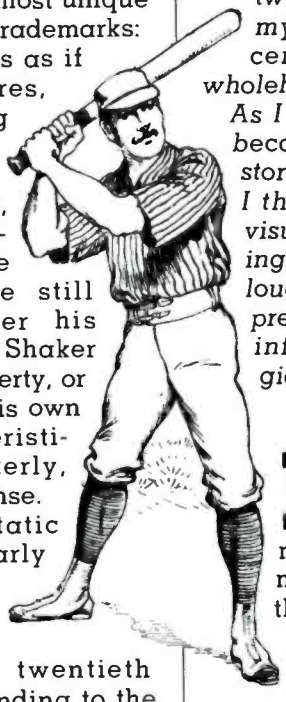
You know as you look at the world unraveling, it's interesting that we Americans are not united by religion, or patriarchy, or even common language, or even a geography that's relatively similar. We have agreed because we hold a few pieces of paper and a few sacred words together. We have agreed to cohere, and for more than 200 years it's worked and that special alchemy is something I'm interested in. It doesn't work in a Pollyannaish way. Boss Tweed had his hands in the building of the Brooklyn Bridge. We corrupt as much as we construct, but nevertheless, I think that in the aggregate the American experience is a wonderful beacon."

Ken Burns acknowledges that his approach to the documentary has been influenced by a wide variety of people, especially still photographers Jerome Liebling and Elaine Mayes, historian David McCullough, as well as the work of selected Hollywood and nonfiction filmmakers. He instantly impressed me as someone just brimming with self-confidence, filled with drive and enthusiasm, and resolutely earnest in his beliefs. His delicately thin and boyish appearance belies his 40 years. He was born in Brooklyn, and raised in Ann Arbor where his father taught cultural anthropology at the University of Michigan. In the Fall of 1971, he enrolled at Hampshire College, an experimental liberal arts college in central Massachusetts founded only two years earlier, where he studied under Liebling and Mayes. As Ken remembers,

"Interestingly both of these people, Jerry and Elaine are still photographers, primarily, their work in film has been tangential, but they made excellent film teachers, and guided me ... I think the amazing thing for us was that film and photography were being taught together, which seems sort of obvious, but I don't know of any other instance where they are. And so there were essentially men and women that had a healthy respect for the image influencing us documentary filmmakers, in fact, persuading us sometimes Hollywood-headed filmmakers that the documentary world could be as dramatic and as revealing as anything Hollywood can turn out. And I really believe that's true, and I combine that

with a latent interest in history to sort of set me on my way."

This linkage of film and photography is one of Ken Burns's most unique and identifiable stylistic trademarks: he treats old photographs as if they were moving pictures, panning and zooming within the frame, shifting back-and-forth between long shots, medium shots, and close-ups; while correspondingly, handling live shots as if they were still photographs. Whether his subject happens to be a Shaker chair, or the Statue of Liberty, or a Civil War battlefield, his own live footage is characteristically formal and painterly, almost in an academic sense.



This emphasis on static composition is particularly effective in evoking the mood and pre-filmic visual vocabulary of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, thus corresponding to the historical eras and topics that he invariably chooses to explore, such as *The Brooklyn Bridge*, his first major production.

"I had a case of pneumonia and a friend of mine in January of 1977, gave me the paperback version of McCullough's history of The Great Bridge, and I suddenly was so inspired. Here was a man who brought history to life. He is our greatest narrative historian, I think. He let the past speak for itself, something I had been experimenting with in my own crude college films, that is to say, using diaries and journals. And here was a subject that seemed to be a part of the hidden history of America, the history we were never taught, as we focused on wars and presidents and Indians fighting and lawlessness; here was something going on that seemed to speak as much about who we are as anything, and it was urban and it was Eastern and corrupt and dangerous. It was about the arts and the sciences that would be more influential in the twentieth century than a lot of the mythology of the nineteenth century, and I sort of went at it wholeheartedly.

As I got to know McCullough, he became very helpful in refining a story, and how you tell a story. And I think if you combine the great visual and sort of honorable teachings of Jerry Liebling with McCullough's sense of narrative, that's a pretty potent combination, and two influences, the shoulders of two giants on whom I stand."

David McCullough recalls being initially approached by Burns at an academic conference where the filmmaker, who was twenty four at the time, expressed his interest in making a documentary on *The Great Bridge*: "I didn't want to have anything to do with him, and if anybody was going to make a film based on my book, I wanted it to be somebody who had more experience and more standing."

To this day, however, Burns contends that "perseverance is the single greatest element" in his success. He wrote McCullough letters, and later he and his associates contacted him by phone. "The people who work for me, we work hard, we don't give up." McCullough finally acquiesced.

As Jerome Liebling explains, Ken "had direction and tenacity, but he looked about 12 years old. People scorned his youth—who is this kid?—but as soon as he began to make films, that attitude changed."

Ken's colleagues speak of his "single-minded ... willfulness" that kept them all going in the early years. He and two of his college friends formed their own independent produc-

tion company immediately upon graduating from college.

"I am particularly fortunate because I went to Hampshire which stressed the sort of self-initiated route of designing one's curriculum, a kind of mode of inquiry that I brought out into the real world, so that instead of apprenticing myself, I started my own company in 1975, Florentine Films, which has undergone many metamorphoses since that time. Originally it was named after the suburb of Northampton, Massachusetts, where our beloved film teacher Elaine Mayes lived, called Florence. As a joke, I sort of christened the name Florentine Films. We wink and like to say that it's a renaissance in filmmaking. At that time it started with three of us—all Hampshire College students, all of us about to graduate, or would graduate in a few years. And expanded to five, with the first project that we did of any magnitude, besides day-by-day crew work to get by for the BBC or industrial films, was the history of the Brooklyn Bridge ... We later went to Walpole, New Hampshire, where since 1979 I've been producing historical films. I actually have a company called American Documentaries that sort of is the shadow behind Florentine Films."

Ken is a hands-on and versatile producer who is personally involved in researching, fund raising, co-writing, shooting, directing, editing, scoring, and even promoting his films. Despite this close and longstanding affiliation with non-commercial television, Ken Burns still shares much with that young boy growing up in Ann Arbor who once dreamed of becoming the next John Ford. Like many of the so-called film generation, he became acquainted with the work of this Hollywood legend on late-night television, remembering especially *Young Mr. Lincoln, My Darling Clementine,* and *Fort Apache.* Ford was a visual poet of the first order; he was also a sentimentalist and a populist, stressing a sense of nostalgia and a firm commitment to the ways of the past. Many of these conventional elements still inform Ken Burns's documentaries as well.

"I had always wanted to be a Hollywood director. I looked up to Hitchcock and Hawks and Ford as sort of beacons of how I'd want to do, but I think as I look back now in retrospect, I realize how influential Ford was. If you look at sort of my whole body of work, it's a kind of documentary version of Ford that is a real love for biography, a real love for American mythology, a real love for the music of the period, a real love for ordinary characters who coexist not just on the fringes of our main character's actions, but who are actually central to the drama and remind us that the best history is not just from the top down, but from the bottom up."

Burns similarly acknowledges his debt to Colin Low and Wolf Koenig of the Canadian Film Board whose use of still photographs in *City of Gold* opened up an assortment of nineteenth century topics to filmmakers who now felt free to scour archives, gradually refining their research skills as they went along.

"I would consider City of Gold an influential film, and Perry Miller Adato's When This You See, Remember Me, a biography of Gertrude Stein, but I think in both cases I've evolved something on my own. I haven't seen those films since the early 1970s so it is hard for me to know precisely the extent that they influenced me, but I know that they stand out because of the use of diaries and journals."

Ken Burns is an original when considered within the context of the documentary tradition, although his style does evoke singular techniques of others who have gone before, such

as off-screen narration, the use of stock footage, and most distinctly, his skill at "rephotographing." The nonfiction filmmaker he most reminded me of throughout our interview was not an innovator in revivifying still photographs or movie film from the early days of television—but surprisingly, Robert Flaherty, the acknowledged father of the form, especially when Ken described his "left-hand, right-hand process" of simultaneously shooting and writing his scripts, "leaving himself open to discovery as long as possible."

Burns's films, of course, do not resemble the much less formal and looser structures of *Nanook of the North*, or *Man of Aran*, or *The Louisiana Story* in any literal fashion, but his expressed passion for finding the inherent drama and poetry in his subjects suggests Flaherty's own "ritual of discovery," or the striving for an openness and full absorption with the topic, more so than the stated intentions of any other documentation, past or present.

Ken likewise contrasts himself with two of his contemporaries:

"It's really how we're using the form that's the most critical difference ... I think Errol Morris is wonderful. I love his humor and his dryness and the stylization of his stuff. An Errol Morris has a stylized kind of humorous detached, cold, but not in a negative way, relationship to his subject. Bill Moyers has a kind of combination of evangelical and political purpose to his work ... I love Bill Moyers work tremendously. I love the kind of evangelical fervor. I feel like he's a cross between a politician and a preacher. I love a man who can take the medium and really has no artful pretenses, just really wishes to tell me things, to inform me.

Mine is emotional. Mine's about stories. I feel connected to the Homeric tradition where we might be singing our epic verses to one another, no longer around a campfire, but maybe around this electronic campfire. It's really how you use it. My emotionalism would look absolutely silly on Errol Morris, and Moyer's politics wouldn't sit well with me. I agree with most of his politics, but I prefer a gentler kind of persuasion ... All my work is animated by the question 'who are we?' that is to say who are we as a people? What does it mean to be an American?"

Much has been written about Ken Burns's five year commitment to *The Civil War*, "working sixteen hour days, surrounding and absorbing" the intricacies of his subject, "searching for images in an archeological pursuit of the moment that speaks." He, in turn, used television to bring his findings about American history to life for literally tens of millions of viewers, a feat few had been able to accomplish before him.

"We wanted you to believe you were there ... there is not one shot, not one photograph of a battle ever taken during the Civil War. There is not one moment in which a photographer exposed a frame during a battle, and yet you will swear that you saw battle photography ... You live inside those photographs, experiencing a world as if it was real inside those photographs. ... Walt Whitman said at the end of the Civil War: 'future years will never know the seething hell and the black infernal background of this secession war. And it is best they should not.'

"'The real war,' Whitman said, 'will never get in the books.' There was a sense that the literature of American History might be limited by the page, but once you've taken the poetry of words and added to it a poetry of imagery and a poetry of music and a poetry of sound, I think you begin to approximate the notion that the real

war could actually get someplace, that you could bring it back alive."

In all of his documentaries, in fact, Ken Burns emphasizes first-person stories and anecdotes, the stuff of personal heroism and tragedy, from inside the framework of larger historical currents and event. His interest in pursuing the past through film was kindled by his father's example as an anthropologist and as an amateur photographer when Ken was very young.

"As a little kid from age 10, I was never reading novels. My brother was sort of digesting them constantly, but I was reading the encyclopedia. And I went through one set, and then another set. And I'd read history and things like that, and it was completely untrained. At Hampshire I think I took one history course and that was in Russian history, and no American history outside of the 11th-grade survey. But low and behold, I found a kind of much deeper, less-intellectual, more emotional sympathy with the story of the country. The resonances of particular lives or events seemed to really spark powerful emotions within me that sort of demanded their exploration, and I'm still doing that. I'm still surprised continually at the depth of my real love."

Ken Burns has recently agreed to produce three major projects for public television. He is currently finishing a 12-hour, nine-part history of baseball which will premiere on PBS during the fall of 1994. He has next committed to a 10-hour, seven-part multicultural history of the American West which is scheduled for the network in 1996. And he has an agreement with General Motors to oversee a series entitled, *American Lives*, where various documentarians, including himself, will film brief biographies of important historical figures, such as Thomas Jefferson, Susan B. Anthony, and Mark Twain. His involvement with *American Lives* also ensures that Burns will remain a fixture at PBS into the next century. In many ways, he is the ideal filmmaker for this period of transition between generations, bridging the sensibilities of the people who came-of-age during World War II along with his own frame-of-reference as a babyboomer. He attributes that the reason he chooses the topics he does has a great deal to do with both the fifties and sixties...

"...because I think that maybe all of that stimulus from the centennial celebration of the Civil War, to the mythology that still pertained, not only got fixed, but then got challenged in the sixties. And I think that those two things going in opposite directions, probably accounts for why we're all drawn to these subjects right now ... If you look at all my films there is a connecting thread of the black experience in them. Wait until you see Baseball. *It's the climax—the Battle of Gettysburg and the Emancipation Proclamation rolled into one with Jackie Robinson."*

By his own admission, Ken Burns is fortunate to be working in the right place at the right time. All of his films have won various awards and tributes from professional and scholarly organizations and at international film festivals. Between 1990 and 1992, for instance, Burns and *The Civil War* garnered two Emmys (for "Outstanding Information Series" and "Outstanding Writing Achievement"); a Peabody; a Golden Globe; "Producer of the Year" from the Producers Guild of America; a D.W. Griffith Award; two Grammys; a People's Choice Award for "Best Television Mini-Series." His track record now affords him access to people,

funding, and resources that he could only dream about when he and his wife first moved to rural New England from New York City 14 years ago.

"I am blessed with having had a relationship since 1986 with General Motors who have been absolutely non-interfering, who spend as much on promotion and educational materials as they do for the production budget, which is just extraordinary, and care about who I am—the first to defend my artistic vision and keep their hands off my things. I don't tell them how to make cars, and they have never once told me how to make a film ... I have chosen within the last decade to work with WETA in Washington which is close to the archives, close to the system I adore. Close to the kind of politics that I am often involved with and is run by people I love and care for."

The cost of living in Walpole, New Hampshire also allows Ken the freedom to work on only those projects he creates, develops, and is excited about doing himself. He and Amy share their 175 year old farmhouse with two daughters, Sarah, 10, and Lilly, 6. When they first moved to this quiet, picturesque village on the Connecticut River, they even survived on as little as "$2,500 one year to stay independent." The barn and onetime garage behind the house was converted into an office and production studio, where Burns and his editing crew are presently consumed with assembling the hundreds of hours of stock and original footage that will eventually become *Baseball*.

Despite his many commitments, Ken still considers the prospects of scripting and directing a fiction film someday, although his desire to make a movie is apparently less urgent than it was when he was in his twenties.

"This is a question that I've wrestled with for more than 20 years. I've yet to do that. I've yet to pull that trigger. It may just be that I've got a lot that I want to say about American history, still in me, or it may be I'm not suited to that. That my films are really made in the editing room. And feature films are not. They're made shooting. You have to previsualize everything.

I am dumb. I have to work a structure and tear it apart and rework it and do that, and find the truth in it in the editing room. If you came in right now and looked at an episode of Baseball it would be ungodly long and boring and seemingly unstructured, but hopefully in a year and a half, you'll see something that you like."

Not surprisingly, *Baseball* is his highest professional priority these days. Like the other subjects he tackles, particularly the *The Civil War* and *The West*, baseball is yet another compelling aspect of growing up as a boy in postwar culture.

Ken calls it "the Rosetta stone ... if you understand it, you can understand our country." And as he's done eight times before, he's now back in Walpole, "inhabiting" his dreams of America in just the kind of town that suggests an earlier time. He also promises to "return to tell us what he's learned." In this respect, no one has ever done a better job of bringing American history "back alive" to more of us through the power and reach of television than Ken Burns. ■

Gary Edgerton is Professor and Chair of the Communication Department at Goucher College in Baltimore; and the Vice President/President-Elect of the American Culture Association. He is the author of books and articles on a wide range of media and culture topics.

"YOU CAN'T TELL THE PLAYERS WITHOUT A SCORECARD" ...

In his epic 18-hour miniseries on PBS, planned for a Fall 1994 debut, Ken Burns and his production team have broken down the history of baseball into nine segments or "innings". Batter up!

1. "Our Game" (a quote from Walt Whitman) looks at the origins of baseball and takes the story up to 1900. Burns rebuffs the myth that Abner Doubleday invented baseball in Cooperstown and traces its roots instead to the earliest days of the nation. "Children have been hitting balls with bats and sticks as long as there have been children," says Burns. "But there are also records of a game called 'Base' being played at Valley Forge." The earliest game of "baseball", as we know it today, was played on June 19, 1846 in Hoboken, New Jersey at a place called Elysian Fields.

2. The Look of Eagles takes the viewer through 1910 and introduces some of the sport's most colorful characters. These were the first great years for the game, a time when it produced Ty Cobb, Honus Wagner, Christy Mathewson and Walter Johnson.

3. "The Faith of 50 Million People" looks at the century's second decade, which was dominated by the 1919 Black Sox Scandal. The quote is from F. Scott Fitzgerald who had implied that gambler Arnold Rothstein had played with "the faith of 50 million people" when he enticed the White Sox to throw the Series.

4. "A National Heirloom" sportswriter Jimmy Cannon's phrase describing Babe Ruth, whose phenomenal performance thrilled the nation throughout the 1920's and rescued it from the scandal of the decade before. Burns takes a look at the Yankees' "Murderers' Row" lineup and the milestone achievement of Ruth's 60 home runs in 1927.

5. Shadow Ball tells the story of the Negro Leagues in the 1930's. Its title refers to a common pre-game feature in Negro baseball in which the players would thrill the incoming fans by playing a mock game with an imaginary ball. Though unintended, the pantomime was a brilliant metaphor for the exclusion of blacks from major league play at that time. Burns tells the story of the Negro League stars side-by-side with the story of white stars.

6. The Climax of Baseball, the 1940's, is still without a title. This episode includes Joe DiMaggio's celebrated hitting streak, the awe-inspiring performance of Ted Williams, and what Burns describes as "baseball's finest moment", the appearance of Jackie Robinson who broke the color barrier as a member of the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947. "I think it's one of the most poignant moments in the history of the country," he says, "Gettysburg and the Emancipation Proclamation rolled into one,"

7. The Capital of Baseball takes viewers through the 1950's when New York City had three successful baseball teams and dominated the World Series (with a representative in the contest every year but one). Black stars like Willie Mays, Elston Howard, Don Newcombe and Roy Campanella joined Jackie Robinson as the game thrived with an extraordinary display of both speed and power—baseball at its very best.

8. A Whole New Ballgame moves the stage to the 1960's and describes the emergence of television, the expansion to new cities, and the building of multi-purpose stadiums that robbed the game of its intimacy and some of its urban following. The New York Mets are added to the National League, and although performing miserably, the team becomes a popular sensation. Pitching dominates as Sandy Koufax and Bob Gibson excel. Koufax pitches four no-hitters and Gibson's 1.12 ERA in 1968 is the best in 55 years.

9. Home looks at baseball from the 1970's on, including the establishment of the free agent system, the rise in player compensation, the continued expansion, the dilution of talent, the ongoing battles between labor and management, and the scandals. Burns examines the triumph and tragedy of one team, the Boston Red Sox.

In a tag-on that he calls *Extra Innings* Burns then considers where baseball will go from here. He looks at what remains of the game's charm and what has been lost, focusing on baseball's extraordinary connection with its own historical roots.

Burns shows how the game is handed down from generation to generation as a kind of "secular religion" devoted to the American themes of individuality and team spirit. "It connects with out own histories," he says, "and our fathers' and grandfathers' histories."

He concludes that the essential aspects of the game—the fact that it is played outside of time, that is distances are so perfectly measured and that is is, like life, essentially more about failure than success (a great hitter is one who fails seven times out of ten)—are what keep us coming back for more. "*Baseball* resonates with us," says Burns, "because it is about us."

John Chancellor has been chosen as the narrator for *Baseball*. The narrator is the lone voice of authority in most documentaries, Burns explains, often telling the viewer both what he sees, and what he should think about what he sees. But Burn's documentaries tend to be more like feature films: more "story" than "argument." The voices of dozens of actors and celebrities bring historical photos alive, driving the tale while the narrator's voices enters only as a subtle guiding force.

Among the voices who will be heard throughout *Baseball* are Keith Carradine, Ossie Davis, Julie Harris, Garrison Keillor, Tip O'Neil, Jason Robards, Eli Wallach, John Cusack, Derek Jacobi, Paul Roebling, Gregory Peck and Anthony Hopkins.

Burns is the producer and director of *Baseball*, and Lynn Novick is the co-producer. The series is a production of Florentine Films and WETA, Washington, D.C. ■

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"DAT OLE' TIME RELIGION" BROADCASTING AND THE PULPIT

BY JACK KUNEY

"Gimme Dat Ole Time Religion
Gimme Dat Ole Time Religion
Gimme Dat Ole Time Religion
It's Good Enuff Fo' Me!"
—Early Negro Spiritual

In 1921, KDKA, the Westinghouse Electric Company's experimental radio station in Pittsburgh, got a jump start on religious broadcasting by presenting a service by the Reverend Edwin Van Etten from the city's Calvary Episcopal Church. Even in those early days right after World War I, the idea of using the airwaves as a pulpit had extraordinary appeal for the clergy. By 1923, 12 different religious organizations had sought and secured broadcast licenses, joining the more than 500 stations that went on the air within the year, among them 72 universities, 60 newspapers and 29 department stores. The list of applicants who gained station ownership was long and varied, but religion grabbed a hold on the coattails of broadcasting, one it has never relinquished.

In its first decade of expansion and experimentation, the role of religion in broadcasting was constantly being debated, although the big questions were never satisfactorily answered: was radio hurting the church, keeping congregations at home? Were on-the-air preachers a satisfactory replacement for church attendance, especially when there was no way to pass the plate. The debate was still raging when the first fundamentalists began buying air time, soliciting dollars for a wide variety of religious endeavors, many of them spurious.

In the beginning, most listeners sampled the air ministry, staying home to listen, even though they

found it wanting. One minister in Louisville, Kentucky, aware of his slowly diminishing congregation, put up a sign in front of his church which said: "God is always broadcasting here."

As one church leader put it, the big concern was that religion was being driven out of the mainstream of American life by radio to "become of marginal value, cultivated by marginal people on marginal time." But the growth continued nevertheless, the churches joining in full fury. Radio transmitting towers began to appear on churches and bible institutes. To the religious, it seemed the Christian thing to do; for after all, as the Bible told everyone, "the word should be proclaimed upon the house tops!"

One of the licensees in Los Angeles was the legendary evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson, who unfortunately wasn't too well versed about the specificity of her station's wave length, and after some careless scattering of her signal all over the broadcast bands, she received several warnings from the office of then Secretary of Commerce, Herbert Hoover, who finally ordered one of the department's inspectors to seal the station. Whereupon, she wired Hoover:

"Please order your minions of Satan to leave my station alone (STOP) You cannot expect the almighty to abide by your wave length nonsense (STOP) When I offer my prayers to him, I must fit into his wave length (STOP) Open this station at once."

The religious broadcasting spree of the 80's was still a long time in coming. Broadcasting in those early years became a pulpit for some of the more prominent Protestant preachers—men like Harry Emerson Fosdick, Ralph Sockman and Joseph F. Newton. Their religious messages were directed towards ethical and social values, with none of the money-grubbing and tub-thumping used by the televangelists more than a half century later.

By the end of the first decade of radio broadcasting, Fosdick, through his National Radio Pulpit, had established himself as the most popular of the radio preachers; in 1929 NBC provided him with a weekly forum through a program called *National Vespers*. In 1930, *The Catholic Hour* appeared, along with *The Lutheran Hour*.

Most of these broadcasts were rather traditional in thrust, closely following what had been generally accepted as church service. One denomination that tried to break the mold was the Mormons, who used their time to present a program by the 150-member Tabernacle Choir and were quite successful in finding an audience which crossed all religious lines.

Eric Barnouw, in the first volume of his splendid three-volume history of broadcasting, *A Tower in Babel*, tells the story of "Professor" Charles D. Herrold, or as he was better known, "Doc" Herrold, one of the earliest of the broadcast pioneers, who made his home in San Jose, California, and had begun transmitting—sans license—in 1909. He continued to operate intermittently until he was stopped by World War I.

After the war, he tried to revive the station, but failed, and eventually sold it lock, stock and microphone to the First Baptist Church of San Jose, who in turn gave it over to a local business man named Fred J. Hart.

As Barnouw continues the story: "No money seems to have been involved. The church was assured of free broadcasting time for twenty years. Sundays were allotted to the church, which was undoubtedly relieved to rid itself of repair and maintenance costs."

The end of the tale is that Hart, the

commercial operator, eventually sold it himself to someone else, who then re-sold it to the newly-created Columbia Broadcasting System, which made it their San Francisco affiliate, KCBS.

It was the beginning of a trend—ownership by churches began to diminish as they found it easier to buy time than pay the administrative, talent and technical costs for their own stations. The churches, however, became good customers for the broadcasters. One station—among many—which broadcast religious programs on a commercial basis was WJR, Detroit. In 1926, WJR persuaded Father Charles Coughlin of The Shrine of the Little Flower in Royal Oak, Michigan, to experiment by using radio for his fund-raising. The rest is history.

Some background first. The Great American Depression which began in 1929 when the stock market collapsed had little impact on the growth of radio. It grew exponentially, just as television did in the later 40's after World War II. There were regulations for the broadcasters—by the bookfull, but they were fought vigorously by the station owners. Aberrant behavior on the part of those early operators as to how their license could be used was not unusual. Father Coughlin stands out as a prime example.

He had begun his radio career rather quietly at a small station in Royal Oak, just outside of Detroit. He was later quoted as saying the reason he had chosen broadcasting was the blazing cross he had found planted on the lawn outside of his newly completed church—a warning from the Ku Klux Klan. An extended radio audience was certain to help him fight bigotry.

As time went on, just the opposite turned out to be true. A maverick, Coughlin began by supporting the candidacy of Franklin Delano Roosevelt for the presidency in 1932, but in a matter of years, be became FDR's bitterest enemy. Yet his popularity grew to staggering proportions. His radio sermons—once pleasant discourses on the life of Christ and the lessons of the Bible—by the mid-30's had almost become completely political in content.

Broadcast around the nation on the CBS Network—as a boy, I heard him over WMAQ in Chicago, which was then a CBS affiliate— Father Coughlin became increasingly anti-New Deal, a strong supporter of German National Socialism and a virulent anti-semite. James Hennessey in his 1981 book, *American Catholics*, wrote: "Coughlin's activities revealed the power of radio preachers to appeal to the darker side of the human condition, feeding racism, prejudice and bigotry in the name of God."

After World War II, television began its extraordinary growth, but most religious broadcasting was related to radio. Among the small independent stations in the country, by now numbering in the thousands, it was not unusual for any number of itinerant preachers from lesser known churches and strange denominations to buy time and provide lengthy sermons on transcriptions, which became standard fare for Sunday mornings in many communities.

Each program would usually conclude with some kind of appeal for money. The road was opened for the fundamentalists who would come along forty years later, broadcasting on television, garnering millions of dollars in donations from their constituents.

On the radio networks, one of the better produced religious programs had made its debute in October, 1944, on New York City's WEAF while the war was still on, a program which eventually became a fixture of NBC's Sunday morning programming. The series was called *The Eternal Light*

and was produced by a dedicated young man by the name of Milton Krents, working in co-operation with the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City.

It was a first-class production right down the line. NBC provided a splendid orchestra staffed by members of Arturo Toscanini's NBC Symphony and conducted by Milton Katims. Head writer Morton Wishengrad wrote most of the scripts, which were stories of Judaism, past and present, told in dramatic form. Among the actors were such radio heavyweights as Alexander Scourby, Joe Wiseman, Norman Rose, Roger deKoven and Adelaide Klein.

The Eternal Light On Radio, lasted until the 50's, overlapping the television version that began in 1951 as part of NBC's split inter-faith programming which was seen under the collective title, *Frontiers of Faith*. This marked the beginning of religion's Golden Age of Television. Before it was over, all three networks would have creative staffs at work producing religious programs—not in prime time, perhaps—but filling the Sunday morning schedule with wonderful shows which often tested the bounds of what could properly be called religious programs.

By 1953, NBC had discarded the umbrella title, *Frontiers of Faith*, giving the show title to the Protestants, while the Catholics revived *The Catholic Hour* and the Jews adopted the old radio series title, *The Eternal Light*. The CBS Network was on the air with an hour which consisted of two separate shows, *Lamp Unto My Feet* and *Look Up and Live*. Pamela Ilott was the executive producer of both programs, also producing "Lamp."

ABC waited until 1960 to introduce its contribution to religious broadcasting, *Directions*, produced by Wiley Hance.

At this time, Ed Stanley, who was NBC's director of public affairs programming and supervisor of their three rotating religious half-hours, was quoted as saying, "There is more actual experimentation in our religious area than any other area in television. Our religious programs often tackle problems that the networks might not otherwise touch." It was true.

It's impossible to recount the history of religious broadcasting in radio and television during this period without citing the incredible primetime success story of Bishop Fulton J. Sheen.* In February of 1952, the DuMont Network introduced Bishop Sheen on Tuesday evenings at 8pm and he continued there until April of 1955. In the fall of that year, he moved to ABC, first at 8pm on Thursday and finally at 9pm on Monday. The show ended its run in April of 1957.

In spite of Sheen's great visibility, however, it was Norman Vincent Peale who became the resident expert for religion on television, and Billy Graham who was the country's dominant religious personality, associating with presidents; purchasing prime time on selected stations for his sermons and conversions.

My own experience with religious television was as the producer of *Look Up and Live*, live on the CBS Network at 10:30 am, every Sunday morning for over five years. It was the most creative era of my young life, facing a blank screen every week, fifty-two weeks a year, trying to come up with new, interesting and different programming covering a variety of religions and religious themes. My commitment began in 1955 and ended in 1960.

Luckily for me, it was a time when the churches were being challenged to do "more;" to try and become more socially relevant; to make a more active contribution to the civic and

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humanitarian concerns of the community, whatever the denomination of the house of worship.

The assignment was presented to me by Irving Gitlin, who was the director of public affairs programming at CBS. His only admonition was to stay out of trouble with the various religious groups we had to work with. It seems the show had been experimenting with various formats using dance, drama, music, trying to be innovative, but constant bickering between ministries and the network had kept the show in conflict.

Production teams from the denominations usually suggested subject material and possible guests. The Catholics and the Jews were moderately satisfied with the status quo, but the Protestants were restless. They had given their franchise over to the Youth Board of the National Council of Churches and now were searching for young, non-conventional audiences, correctly assessing that the people who go to church on Sunday morning, don't watch Sunday morning television.

Their hope was they could find an audience of the "un-churched," mainly young teenagers and young adults who might respond to some creative approaches in programming.** Early experiments with a minister named Lawrence McAllister and a young band singer named Merv Griffin acting as spokesmen were notable failures causing conflict between the Council and the CBS network. I was to be the peacemaker.

It wasn't easy. Months passed before the program began to run smoothly. The Youth Board which had once been alienated became supportive. Key among the program's boosters was a young minister named Alvah I. Cox. "Al" was very attuned to the youth culture that was to emerge in the 60's and liked some of my early efforts. One employee of the Council was a radio production veteran named John Gunn. He, too, was assigned to the show and became a creative tower of strength with good ideas and notions on how to execute them. (It might also be noted the Rev. Andrew Young sat on the Youth Board and spent the years just prior to his joining Martin Luther King as a valuable ally.)

Nothing was formally documented, but we did have a peace treaty of sorts. It was decided that the Board would give me certain religious ideas to work with, even specifying biblical chapter and verse if need be, and from these tenets I would be free to book talent and commission scripts. The series slowly became less of a religious forum and more a way of using the arts to project religious ideas*.

I was never able to figure out the breakdown which determined how the three major religions divided their time on *Look Up and Live*. The formula had been negotiated by Pamela Ilott, the director of religious programs for the CBS network long before I took over. A little more than half the weekly shows were co-produced with the Protestants. Of the rest, most were Catholic, produced in co-operation with the National Council of Catholic Men, and about ten or fifteen programs a year were accomplished with the help of the New York Board of Rabbis.

Each religion treated their alotted time differently, the Catholics being the least willing to adapt to the program's new format emphasizing the arts. (Remember, the era of Pope John XXIII was yet to come. The mass was still in Latin, the priests presenting their backs to the congregation.) The only way we would break the rigid hold the church held on the

** Exciting things were also happening on British television about the same time. My friend Michael Redington produced a brilliant program called* Christ in Blue Jeans *on ATV, London.*

program was in presenting an occasional drama about some saint or religious order that had influenced the church in generations past. The furthest we could get from dogma was when we did some scenes from George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*, starring Siobhan McKenna, the great Irish actress.

The Jews had been a kind of *Eternal Light* clone before the change was made, but with the help of Rabbi Philip Hiat who was our liaison with the Board of Rabbis, there was a decided shift in content.

Money to experiment with was hard to come by. The budgets on our weekly programs were minimal by network standards—$4800 per program. Luckily, we were able to stockpile budgets using savings from one show for another. For example, we would frequently pick a subject, use a single narrator and fill that show with stock footage or photo blowups. Then, cumulatively, we would have enough in our kitty to do whatever we wanted to: hire musicians, rent costumes or special props, augment our set. We did wonders with this formula, especially with the Jews and the Protestants.

The Jews first: Some examples I recall include a program on the Yiddish Theatre, starring the legendary performer, Molly Picon; a show with Roman Vishniac, the famed still photographer and microbiologist, displaying his sensitive reportage of the Jews in Eastern Europe before Hitler; an original ballet choreographed by Anna Sokolow, based on illustrations from "Song of Songs"; a program on the fall of the Warsaw Ghetto which featured Theo Bikel, the actor/folk-singer, then playing opposite Mary Martin in *The Sound of Music* who took some days off to do our program.

We almost destroyed a CBS studio with the Bikel broadcast. Our closing was planned on a great map of Warsaw in which we hoped—on camera—to burn the ghetto area. We never lit the fire in rehearsal, saving the effect for our live air show. It worked great, except when it came time to put out the fire—then we had to call the fire department.

For another program, we even commissioned an original opera called *Sarah* by prize-winning composer Ezra Laderman, using a full symphony orchestra led by Alfredo Antonini. The opera stretched, CBS cut our credits and musical closing for a promotional announcement. I flipped, but it didn't do much good. Whatever, it was all very heady stuff, worthy of the time and effort we put into it.

But our real strength was in our Protestant programming. Here, as I said, we were trying to reach the young and the unchurched. This was the late 50's when the baby boomers were just coming of age, about to enter the tumultuous decade of the 60's. One dramatic mini-series of three programs attempted successfully to characterize that generation and epitomized more than anything else what we were trying to do on *Look Up and Live*. George C. Scott played a beat poet in one of them.

The shows were narrated by an extraordinarily gifted young minister named Bill Kirkland, who was a professor of Christian Ethics at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago. Bill was a soft-spoken southerner whose religion permeated every fibre of his being. He didn't have to preach, his relationship to everything he touched bore witness to his relationship with God.

The programs were played on three successive Sundays in January of 1959, each one designed to be a delineation of three contemporary characters who were impacting on our young people at that moment in time: "The Hipster", "The Delinquent" and "The Square." The shows were cast impec-

cably. Pat de Simone played the delinquent, George C. Scott the hipster and Warren Berlinger the square, aided by two friends, played by a young Warren Beatty and Robert Hill, Jr. The scripts were by Elliott Baker, who would go on to write a splendid serio-comic novel called *A Fine Madness*, which, in turn, became a funny movie starring Sean Connery.

In the first script— "The Hipster," Kirkland himself wrote the closing narration, a kind of credo for many of the youth oriented programs we were to do on *Look Up and Live*:

"The new young writers who claim to be the spokesmen for you insist that yours is fundamentally a 'religious' generation. Whether this is true depends on what is meant by religious. But there is one quality in you that is positive and promising. It is your refreshing honesty. You will not buy easy answers or glossy gospels. You are searching for that which is real, vital, and elemental. You yearn for a cause to which you can give yourself with abandon. Yet you are skeptical enough to hold back your total commitment until you find a cause that will not deceive or disillusion you—a cause that will not blow up in your face.

"This is the hidden promise in the outlook that has let some call you the uncommitted and the silent generation. With you it may be all or nothing at all. This may well be one of the most promising points of contact between the living God of Biblical faith and you of this younger generation; between God's rigorous demand for truth in the inward being and your own impatience with pretense and falsity."

Two other *Look Up and Live* programs I was especially proud of seemed to fit under no particular religious umbrella, but I did them anyway. On one, we had the cast of the Broadway musical *West Side Story* in the studio singing hits from the show. We tried to get Leonard Bernstein to appear, but in his place he sent Jerome Robbins, the choreographer of *West Side Story*, for a rare television appearance. The discussion with Robbins turned to the contemporary youth culture as exemplified by *West Side Story*, and the program worked brilliantly for us. The other program was called *A Gift To Be Simple* and consisted of a complete Shaker service, including the dances and songs of this early American religious community. It made an incredible television half-hour.

As the years went by, the *Look Up and Live* only got better. Audiences sought us out. We often doubled the ratings of the programs which preceeded us. We started getting reviews recognizing our efforts and in due time rewards and prizes. Along with *Lamp Unto My Feet* which preceeded us and *Camera Three* which followed, CBS's Sunday morning was described by one critic as the "intellectual ghetto" of television. I'm not sure if I was pleased by that or not, but nevertheless each week we were challenged to top ourselves, and more often than not we did.

Every member of our staff contributed and went on to make television history. Our scenic designer Gary Smith became an outstanding producer. When Gary left *Look Up and Live*, CBS assigned Marvin Chomsky to the show, and he, too, wound up in Hollywood—as a successful director with shows like *Roots* to his credit. Our wonderful talented and funny director Tim Kiley also went to Hollywood to do *The Flip Wilson Show*, *The Dean Martin Show*, *Star Search*, and many other variety shows and specials.

Our cast lists were also prescient. Some names I've already mentioned like George C. Scott and Warren

Beatty, but there were lots more: Billy Dee Williams, Sal Mineo, Colleen Dewhurst, Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, Alan Arkin, Willian Hickey, Barbara Dana, Barnard Hughes, Claudia McNeil, and many others.

We were also into good jazz, and among the people who performed on the show were Dave Brubeck and his Quartet, Lionel Hampton, gospel singer Mahalia Jackson, jazz drummer Max Roach and his Quintet, Miles Davis, Abby Lincoln. There were choreographers like Agnes De Mille, Mary Anthony, Anna Sokolow and John Butler; young writers like Howard Rodman, John Bloch, Elliott Baker, Steve Gethers and David Ebin. Most of the writers all went on to Hollywood; the choreographers stayed home to grace the stages of New York City.

Look Up and Live enjoyed a long run on CBS after I left, along with *Lamp Unto My Feet*, until January 21, 1979, when both programs were axed by the cost-conscious network. The "intellectual ghetto" was gone. The other networks followed suit and religion was no longer a part of Sunday morning.

But religion on television was to take a new turn. Fundamentalists, mainly in the deep south, began to use the medium with hypnotic intensity as a fund-raising tool. In Larry Martz's book, *The Inside Story of the Televangelists*, he describes how two thousand years of Christian theology were reduced to eight words by Jim and Tammy Bakker in the sign-off for their PTL (Praise The Lord) television show:

" ' Remember, God loves you,' said Jim with his rubbery smile.

' He really, really does,' said Tammy, her mascara getting moist again."

This cryptic closing embodies the naivete and hypocrisy behind the Evangelical crusade of the 80's that used television so creatively and with such greed. It was a decade in which dozens of fundamentalists discovered the fact everyone in television has always known—TV's ability to move goods, whether they're can openers or motor cars. The electronic preachers were marketing faith, but in that politically receptive time that faith sometimes became distilled with bigotry, idolatry and avarice. The results were extraordinary by anyone's standards—raising billions of dollars, using the public's airwaves for their theologic messages.

Charles Swann and Jeffrey Haden in their book, *Prime Time Preachers*, identify several types of media ministries: "The Supersavers"—Billy Graham, Oral Roberts, Rex Humbard, Jerry Falwell; "The Mainliners"—Robert Schuller; "The Talkies"—Jim Bakker, Pat Robertson." The two writers list a number of other categories, like "The Teachers, The Rising Stars, and The Unconventional." It's a long list and they all have access and money for lots of air time. (Except, of course, for Jim Bakker, who is currently spending some time in the Federal penitentiary for tax abuses committed while running his PTL network.)

There were once better times for religious broadcasting, and that leaves a question still unanswered. Is there a place in this day and age for creative mainline religious programming on radio and television? What with the continued growth of cable and the expected proliferation of channels, there should be some room on the spectrum where we don't preach or grub for money, yet can glorify the hand of God as seen through the acts of man, celebrating and praising religion, acknowledging acts of faith through song, story and dance.

Of course there are moral, ethical and philosophical considerations to be dealt with, but these things can be addressed in many ways and still demonstrate what German theologian

Paul Tillich called "concern for the ultimate."

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Outside of my own personal reminiscences, I have drawn upon the works of such broadcasting and religious historians as: Eric Barnouw, William F. Fore, A. William Bluem, Robert S. Alley, Hal Erickson and Brian G. Rose. As a resource, I have also used Larry Martz and Ginny Carroll's fine 1988 book, *The Inside Story of the Televangelists and their Holy War* as a resource. ■

During a distinguished career in broadcasting, Jack Kuney has directed and produced programs for NBC, CBS and for PBS and its predecessor NET. He recently retired as a Professor in the television and film department of Brooklyn College. He is the author of *Take One*, interviews with noted TV directors, published by Praeger.

PLAYBACK

Fading Stars

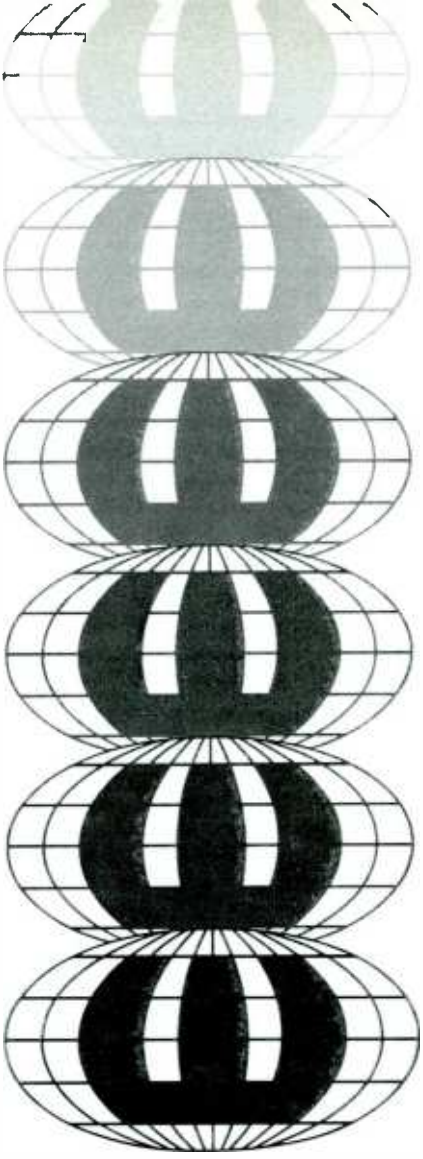
"The star system, as applied to the reporting of news, takes the form of one man (or two men) appearing every day in the role of the all-wise, all-informed, all-knowing journalistic superman—and it is absurd....Good journalism cannot successfully be combined with the time consuming, taxing and fatiguing trappings of the star system.

"Can anyone imagine a greater absurdity than a reporter or a commentator getting up in the morning and opening the newspaper to read his reviews? To see what the critics said about whatever he had on the air the night before?

"In about 15 years, we have developed from nothing to news programs that are a a pretty good summary of the biggest of the news, fair and factual, reasonably imaginative... But there is far more to be done and done better, and I think these further improvements will come faster if the star system is abolished. In time, I suspect it will be.

"It may be that Huntley and Cronkite and I and a few others are the last of a type. We are peculiar to television and we may prove to have been peculiar to our time."

—David Brinkley
Television Quarterly
Spring, 1966
Volume V, Number 2



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MEDICAL TELEVISION: IT'S NOT JUST DR. KILDARE AND DOOGIE HOWSER ANYMORE

Local and network reporters now cover the medicine and health newsbeat. But can they do more than hype a sweeps week? Is the boom in medical news helping make healthier Americans?

BY LEIGH M. DEVINE

With ratings sweeps right around the corner, Dr. Max Gomez, the medical reporter for New York's WNBC, sounds confident as he prepares for a broadcast. He's on top of an exclusive story about the separation of Siamese twins from the Dominican Republic who are joined at the bottom. The twins' trip to the home of a U.S. family had already made *The Maury Povich Show*, but WNBC will have the separation surgery story to itself.

His "Ultimate Risk" segment, as Dr. Gomez describes such sweeps week, sick child-miracle cure stories, is scheduled to run in two parts. At close to 6 minutes allocated to each part, this is a documentary compared to the usual one minute forty-five medico package. Cleverly woven music bites and lingering close-ups of tiny fingers and eyelashes will elicit tears from some viewers. Occasional bleeps on the heart monitors indicate complications, but we know the twins will survive—otherwise, we would not be

seeing it.

As Americans hunger for medical and health information, many turn to television. But what are consumers really tuning in to? How do Siamese twin separation stories, magic bullet, and doomsday stories benefit the viewer? One thing is clear, however: medical television has become an institution within the local and network news world, as well as a multi-million dollar business.

With the present fascination in medical news, it is surprising that news directors did not tap in sooner, as audience interest dates back to the 50's. Besides such successful medical dramas as *Dr. Kildare* of the late 40's, and NBC's *Medic*, from 1954-1956, nonfictional programs were beginning to attract audiences. ABC's *Medical Horizons*, a Sunday afternoon documentary series aired from 1955-57. NBC ran a limited series called *Breakthrough* in 1962 which featured topics such as cancer, and heart surgery. Even Metromedia, (now Fox Television) produced a series called *Miracle in OR-5* in 1967. The short-lived program took viewers into the operating room to witness the latest in surgical techniques.

Dr. Art Ulene and Dr. Tim Johnson, the "TV Docs" of the 70's broke open the field of medical reporting with regular appearances on the networks. Dr. Johnson made a gradual transition from his hospital staff physician practice to broadcasting, starting in 1972, until he became a full-time commentator for ABC's *Good Morning America* in 1979. His role has expanded since then, and he is now Medical Editor for ABC News, making regular appearances on *20/20* and *Nightline*.

Medical reporters as a staple on both local and national television news however, are a relatively new phenomenon, having become essential only during the last decade. In the larger cities, like New York and San Francisco, the health beat has been a video fixture for at least 10 to 15 years, according to Bruno Cohen, Vice President and News Director for WNBC, New York. As a former news director in San Francisco, Cohen has been working with health reporters since 1982. "It has [medical news] become more pervasive in the last 10 years," says Cohen, who notes that it also has spread to smaller broadcast markets.

Indeed, even WCSH, the NBC affiliate in Portland, Maine, a comparatively small market, has a full-time medical reporter. Audience research done there each year rates medical stories high on the list. WCSH News director Larry Price sums up the intrinsic local value of medical news, "People get sick everywhere."

While his current health beat reporter is doing a fine job, Price says he would have to replace her immediately if she left. These days he would not have to look too far for a reporter with M.D. credentials.

In fact, the American Medical Association sponsors a professional organization for television doctors called the National Association of Physician Broadcasters. Since the association's inception in 1982, more than 250 physician "communicators" from 41 different states and a few foreign countries, have joined the NAPB. The NAPB sponsors two annual conferences, and according to executive coordinator Jill Stewart, assists members in improving their journalistic skills including Teleprompter, make-up, and interview techniques.

Network producers point to the thousands of letters and calls they receive after many broadcasts as proof of widespread viewer interest. Following a breast cancer story a few years ago, Susan Schiller, senior producer of medical news at *CBS This Morning*, recalls, "We were asked by a breast cancer foundation, whose 800 number we had broadcast, to go back on the air to ask people not to call." The foundation was getting

far more calls than it could handle.

At CNN's public information office, medical stories always top the list of news attracting the most public feedback, according to Rhonda Rowland, senior producer and correspondent for the CNN medical unit. Rowland's eight-person group is responsible for producing nine medical news minute-and-a-half packages, and two half-hour programs—*HealthWorks*, and *Living in the Nineties*—per week. She suggests that by watching medical news, people can become their own health care advocates. "Patients can guide their own treatment," she says, "It's invaluable."

CBS's Schiller also notes that the traditionally closed medical profession, like any other consumer service, merits close evaluation.

"How many times have we seen cases where a physician is in trouble in one state, then goes to practice in another?" she asks. "There are reasons that hysterectomy rates are high in certain states," she explains, "Patients have a right to know about their care."

In the last few seasons, PBS has devoted significant airtime to medically related programming. *Medicine at the Crossroads*, ten hours of prime time programming, was more than a health and fitness update, but an in-depth and critical look at the public's perception of medicine and health policy in the world today.

Bill Moyer's five-part series, *Healing and the Mind*, ran soon afterwards, also on PBS. This Emmy award-winning program, which explored the use of holistic and alternative medicine in hospitals, universities and by individuals, affirmed broad, mainstream interest in alternative healing, according to Judith Moyer's, president of Public Affairs Television in New York. The series companion book spent nearly 40 weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list.

Within the constraints of the commercial television industry, diligence on the part of broadcasters—producers, reporters, writers, management—is critical to avoid conflict of interest. One of the responsibilities CNN's Rowland faces, for instance, is to check story content so sponsor products do not run adjacent to related medical reports.

Since Bristol Meyers is sole sponsor of CNN's *News from Medicine*, Rowland readily recalls many instances when CNN had to shuffle ads.

"We will pull sponsorship when there's a report about aspirin and heart disease, or if there's a piece about D.D.I., the new AIDS drug, which is manufactured by Bristol Meyers, we don't want it to look like they have any involvement." According to Rowland, the sponsor has no editorial control at all.

PBS producers often have to deal with a similar situation when seeking private funding for documentaries. Although Pfizer did contribute a "tiny amount" to the funding of the PBS series *Medicine at the Crossroads*, producer Stephan Moore says they came in after the rough-cut of one segment had been completed. Moore explains that they did not seek pharmaceutical funding because of the PBS policy—and his own standards—that such sponsorship would undermine the public perception of objectivity.

The documentary was well received, but did not escape reproach from *Washington Post* TV critic, Tom Shales, for utilizing some pharmaceutical funding. According to Shales, the series was compromised by this funding.

"Detroit should not fund a piece about the auto industry," he points out.

Although Moore claims the Pfizer relationship did not compromise objectivity, he did face a difficult situation with a government agency

which contributed $1 million to the project.

"We ran into some problems with the 'Genome Project' segment," Moore explains, when they were strongly encouraged to use certain advisors for the project. "One advisor didn't like the rough cut of this segment, and he made a big fuss."

In the end though, Moore says that everyone on the production side was vigilant, and the requested revisions were not made.

Some medical programming viewers may feel they are becoming empowered by their new found knowledge, but some react cynically. Often, news about avoiding certain foods and activities, for example, can end up as fodder for late night talk show monologues.

If certain reports cause alarm, others reap confusion. At the 1-800 phone bank of the National Cancer Institute, calls pour in by the thousands after treatment "breakthrough" stories. That a treatment may be only experimental, or not appropriate for certain patients, is not always clear in many TV and press stories, says information service chief, Kate Duffy Mazan. "People are hoping this will be the answer for them."

One of the reasons for the concentration of such medical stories, most often found on local TV news, is the symbiotic relationship between local hospitals which need publicity, and local news stations which need inexpensive news which people care about. According to Professor Joseph Turow of the Annenberg School for Communications of the University of Pennsylvania, and author of *Playing Doctor: Television Storytelling and Medical Power*, this comfortable cycle glorifies medical technology.

This approach, he says, makes health care appear "unlimited and accessible to everyone", and only recently has the cycle been interrupted by the Clinton health care reform proposals. These days, he says, network shows are more willing to discuss health care policy and examine its impact, "But I would argue that local television has not done much in this area."

Many physicians, once also considered patient advocates, say they do not have a problem with patients armed with information about their own health care. But in most cases, says Dr. Sharon Mead, a primary care physician in suburban Long Island, "I think they are more confused than more informed."

In practice since 1959, Dr. Mead has seen a change in expectations due to the layman's perception that everything medical can be fixed. "I'm not sure there isn't a connection," she claims, "between the increase in malpractice suits, and the 'miracle' medical stories reported on television."

While often fascinating, the field of medicine usually cannot offer final answers, because of the constantly evolving nature of science. ABC's Dr. Tim Johnson admits that 50 percent of his stories end inconclusively. "The last study is only as good as the last data base," he says.

Given the constraints of time for television reports combined with the complex nature of medicine, it's a wonder that viewers ever got the message about cholesterol. In most news rooms around the country, medical reporters and producers must sort through an incessant barrage of medical information, deciding quickly which stories to do, and how much time to allot them.

Often, the pressures of the business side of television—i.e. "sweeps week", etcetera, bring out the worst in some journalists. Although the dramatic promotion of news is not novel, substantive medical news may take a back seat to lengthy exposes on such things as miracle cellulite cream, and

Siamese twin separations.

WNBC's Dr. Max Gomez, who is a Ph.D. in neuroscience, cringes at the thought of doing certain stories because of the forces of pack journalism.

"Sometimes stories take on a life of their own," he says," even if there is no real science behind them."

"I will try to give perspective to these stories," he explains. "During the commercial break, the anchors will look at me and say 'Is that all there is?' " ABC's Dr. Johnson agrees: "I spend more time keeping stuff off the air."

Another danger which compromises medical reporting comes from TV's frequent demand for experts to legitimize a story. Dr. Michael Brodman, Director of Gynecology at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York City, has been on several news programs. The problems he cites are two-fold.

First, he says, is that you find yourself in many TV station Rolodexes. Asked by a local news producer to comment on-camera about some sort of diaper material which allegedly caused toxic shock, Dr. Brodman declined.

"It was a nonsense topic," he says, "But they always find someone."

Another problem with physicians appearing on television too frequently, Dr. Brodman states, is that it undermines the authority of the local doctor. Shortly after appearing for three minutes on ABC's *Good Morning America* to discuss irregular bleeding, he recalls, "I got calls from Pittsburgh to Colorado—like I was the national expert, and better than their own doctor."

WNBC's Dr. Max Gomez agrees. He gets numerous calls from viewers, and "some of my mother's friends." Ironically, the personal physician seems to be the last person called.

Budgetary limitations of certain stations, combined with the insatiable demand for medical stories, has encouraged new multi-million dollar medical news enterprises in the last decade. In most cases, the video products are verifiable, but not always.

One of the leaders in this business is Medstar Communications of Allentown, Pennsylvania. With a staff of 35, and a roving camera crew which covers medical centers nationally, Medstar provides client stations with a selection of five stories each week. Tom Hauff, Medstar's medical news consultant, and a former news director himself, said cost is the key to the company's success.

"Almost no local station can afford to put resources into a full-time medical reporter," Hauff claims. Medstar currently has contracts with 100 stations around the country.

Competition is growing in this industry; there also are Ivanhoe Productions of Orlando, and Orbis Communications in Chicago. But in the case of Orbis, which has more than tripled its staff in five years, their medical stories are not for sale, they are a P.R. give-away to any station which wants to air them. Funded 100 percent by pharmaceutical or similar industries, Orbis produces the segments, sends out advisories to stations, and interested stations take them off the satellite.

The line between a story being a story and a VNR—video news release—is blurred in this case because of the source of funding. Although Orbis employs an MD editor, and experienced reporters, it is the client who is ultimately responsible for content integrity. For this reason, many news directors will deny they use Orbis material. However, many do carry their offerings.

According to Laura Oswald, senior project manager, a basic story will get 50-60 airings, reaching about six million viewers, in a forty-five day period.

Despite the quagmire of ratings sweeps, budget and time limits, and

ethical problems, most TV journalists like to think they are in the business of informing the public about their health, and contemporary health care issues. The question then remains; Are Americans any healthier these days as a result of all the information?

Alice Austin, of the American Heart Association's New York office, is not so sure. The office phones ring off the hook after locally reported health stories, and literature is sent out generously. Even still, Austin concludes, "People are still very confused about fats."

There might be less confusion, if there were less quickie medical journalism on the air," according to Dr. Isadore Rossman, Emeritus Professor of Medicine of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and advisor to the National Network for Continuing Medical Education. "Too often, TV reporters and their producers overplay and oversimplify research papers in professiona journals." He also is critical of what he calls "rip 'n' read" medical reporting that relies only on wire serivce copy.

"The primary focus should be on preventive medicine, " Rossman says. He urges local stations, for instance, to do more to reach the inner city viewers. "In many urban areas, there is a rising incidence of diabetes, hypertension and coronary heart disease which TV education can do a great deal to combat."

Dr. Rossman also recommends that stations use the full range of their resources, not just public service spots and news programs, but also interviews, talk shows and special events. He'd also like to see the federal government distribute a weekly two-minute "You and Your Health" talk by Surgeon General Joycelyn for local stations.

He believes, however, that Americans are getting healthier. "Over the past twenty years," he points out, "there has been a 60 percent decline in the incidence of stroke and thirty percent decline in coronary heart disease."

"Potentially, television is the most effective educational medium for improving public health," Rossman declares. "But it must do more to realize that potential." ■

Leigh Devine is a New York City based writer and independent producer specializing in science and medicine. She is a former staff producer for Lifetime Television, and is currently producing a series called *Medical History Review* for Medical News Network.

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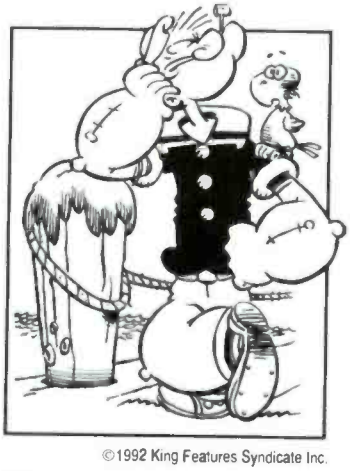

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COURAGE, FEAR AND THE TELEVISION NEWSROOM

BY DAN RATHER

Edward R. Murrow *was* the best. Almost sixty years after he started, almost thirty years after his death—and *still* the best.

He was the best reporter of his generation. The best reporter in broadcasting or print. He reported, he led, he made the best broadcasts of his time, both in radio *and* television. *And* those broadcasts remain, to this day, the best of all time. They include the "This ... Is London" broadcasts from the Battle of Britain, the radio reports from the death camp at Buchenwald, and the television programs on Joseph McCarthy and *Harvest of Shame*.

Ed Murrow was not only the patron and founding saint on electronic news and the best-ever practitioner of it, he also set standards for excellence and courage that remain the standards, the world over. And, along the way, he made the best speech ever by anyone in our business.

Murrow was, in short, a hero. No wonder they have issued a stamp in his name.

But we should, we must remember this: he was a real, flesh-and-blood, flawed, vulnerable, mistake-making hero.

With all of his triumphs, many and mighty, he also fought some fights he should not have fought, and he sometimes, often times, lost. Including losing at the end. In the end, his bosses and his competitors—inside as well as outside his own network—cut him up, cut him down, and finally cut him out.

And not long after that, he died. Cancer was the cause, they say.

Murrow made his memorable Radio and Television News Directors Association speech not at the dawn, nor at midday, but in the twilight—in Chicago, October fifteenth, 1958.

In it, he criticized what commercial

television was becoming, and challenged himself, his colleagues—and us, all of us—to do better.

Ed Murrow said of television: "This instrument can teach, it can illuminate; yes, and it can even inspire. But it can do so only to the extent that humans are determined to use it to those ends. Otherwise it is merely wires and lights in a box. There is a great and perhaps decisive battle to be fought against ignorance, intolerance, and indifference. This weapon of television could be useful."

The Speech Ed Murrow gave at the RTNDA convention in Chicago, 1958, was a risky speech, and he knew it. It was a bold shot, and he knew it. That was part of the Murrow style, and part of what has made the Murrow mystique: the bold, brave shot.

He began that speech with the modest speculation that, and I quote, "This just might do nobody any good." I don't think Ed Murrow believed that. It was a call to arms—the most quoted line is the one about "wires and lights in a box," but the more important line is "this weapon of television." Ed Murrow had seen all kinds of battles, and if *he* lifted *his* voice in a battle cry, surely some of his own colleagues would hear him and heed him.

As with many television and radio news people of my generation, that speech has criss-crossed the backroads of my memory through a lifetime in the business.

I wasn't in Chicago that night. I was in Houston, serving my apprenticeship in news, a beginner in radio and television. I hadn't met Murrow yet. I could only read about his speech in the newspapers, but I absorbed every word. In my own little Texas bayou and pinetree world of journalism dreams, Murrow became protean, titanic, huge. (I still think that.) There were other great ones: William L. Shirer, Eric Sevareid and Charles Collingwood and Douglas Edwards; and later Walter Cronkite—men of courage and accomplishment, of great skill and great intelligence. But Murrow was their leader.

As he had been for many others, Murrow had been my hero when I was just a boy. Across the radio, across the Atlantic and across half the United States, his voice came, the deep rumble and the dramatic pause just when he said, "THIS ... is London." I never got that voice out of my head. It was like a piece of music that has never stopped playing for me. Murrow told me tales of bravery in time of war, tales more thrilling than *Captain Midnight* or *Jack Armstrong* because these were *true*.

He talked about the bravery of soldiers and citizens. He never made a big fuss about his own bravery. But even as a little boy, I knew it took bravery just to stand on that rooftop, with the bombs raining down thunder and lightning all around him ... or to go up in that plane—"D-for-Dog"—with odds he'd never get down alive. And I never forgot that Murrow did all this because he wanted me and my family, and all of us back home in America, to know ... the truth. For that, for our knowledge of the truth, he risked his life.

The Murrow I met years later—person to person, if you will—the real Ed Murrow was everything I wanted that hero to be. He was a quiet man: tall, strong, steady-eyed, not afraid of silence.

What separated Ed Murrow from the rest of the pack was courage.

I know what you're thinking. I've gotten in trouble before for using the word. Probably deserved it. Maybe I used it inappropriately. Maybe I'm a poor person to talk about it because I have so little myself. But I want to hear the word. I want to hear it praised, and the men and women who have courage elevated.

Ed Murrow had courage. He had the physical courage to face the Blitzkreig

in London and to ride "D-for-Dog". He had the professional courage to tell the truth about McCarthyism. And he had the courage to stand before the Radio and Television News Directors Association, and to say some things those good people didn't want to hear, but needed to hear.

In our comfort and complacency, in our (dare we say it?) cowardice, we, none of us, want to hear the battle cry. Murrow had the courage to sound it anyway. And thirty-five years later, however uncomfortable, it's worth pausing to ask—how goes the battle?

In the constant scratching and scrambling for ever better ratings and money, it is worth pausing to ask–how goes the real war, the really important battle of our professional lives? How goes the battle for quality, for truth and justice, for programs worthy of the best within ourselves?

In the constant scratching and scrambling for ever better ratings and money and the boss's praise and a better job, it is worth pausing to ask—how goes the real war, the really important battle of our professional lives? How goes the battle for quality, for truth, and justice, for programs worthy of the best within ourselves and the audience? How goes the battle against "ignorance, intolerance, and indifference"? The battle not to be merely "wires and lights in a box," the battle to make television not just entertaining but also, at least some little of the time, useful for higher, better things? How goes the battle?

The answer we know is "Not very well." In too many important ways, we have allowed this great instrument, this resource, this weapon for good, to be squandered and cheapened. About this, the best among us hang their heads in embarrassment, even shame. We all should be ashamed of what we have and have not done, measured against what we could do ... ashamed of many of the things we have allowed our craft, our profession, our life's work to become.

Our reputations have been reduced, our credibility cracked, justifiably. This has happened because, too often, for too long, we have answered to the worst, not to the best, within ourselves and within our audience. We are less because of this. Our audience is less and so is our country.

Ed Murrow had faith in our country, and in our country's decision to emphasize, from the beginning, commercial broadcasting. He recognized commercial broadcasting's potential, and its superiority over other possibilities. But even as he believed in the strength of market values and the freedom of commercial radio and television, Ed Murrow feared the rise of a cult that worshiped at the shrine of the implacable idol Ratings. He feared that the drive to sell, sell, sell—and nothing but sell—was overwhelming the potential for good, the potential for service of radio and television.

He decried the hours of primetime as being full of (quote) "decadence, escapism, and insulation from the realities of the world in which we live."

He wasn't worried about, didn't live to see *Full House* or *America's Funniest Home Videos* or *Fish Police*. He wasn't worried about, didn't live to see the glut of inanities now in Access time. He never lived to see the cynicism and greed that go into the deci-

sions to put on much of that junk.

In 1958, Murrow was worried because he saw a trend setting in ... avoiding the unpleasant or controversial or challenging ... shortening newscasts and jamming them with ever-increasing numbers of commercials ... throwing out background, context, and analysis, and relying just on headlines ... going for entertainment values over the values of good journalism ... all in the belief that the public must be shielded, wouldn't accept anything other than the safe, the serene, and the self-evident.

Murrow knew that belief was wrong, and contrary to the principles on which this country was founded. He'd seen how honest, mature and responsible American listeners and viewers could be when programming itself was honest, mature and responsible. Reducing the amount of real-world reality on television, Murrow argued, was unconscionable.

But Murrow did not just offer criticism. He also offered solutions. Importantly, Murrow proposed that news divisions and departments not be held to the same standards of ratings and profits as entertainment and sports. He recognized that news operations couldn't be run as philanthropies. But, he added "I can find nothing in the Bill of Rights or the Communications Act which says that [news divisions] must increase their net profits each year, lest the Republic collapse."

Murrow saw turmoil, danger, and opportunity in the world; and the best means of communicating the realities to the public—the communications innovation called television—was increasingly ignoring the realities. And those few Americans who had been given the privilege of owning and operating television stations and networks, the privilege of making great wealth from them, were beginning to reduce if not downright eliminate their responsibilities to public service.

Private profit from television is fine, but there should be a responsibility to news and public service that goes with it; this was the core of Murrow's case.

These were words which needed to be heard. Then, and now. ... I thought about coming here tonight to read you verbatim the text of Murrow's speech from 1958. Much of it is more true, more dire, more needed than it was when Murrow said it.

When Murrow spoke to your predecessors at RTNDA, he knew that they were not his problem. The people he wanted most to hear and heed his speech were not in that Chicago ballroom. They worked in boardrooms, not newsrooms. Murrow's Chicago speech was a brave, bold bid to persuade corporate executives, both at stations and networks and at the advertising agencies and corporate sponsors.

He failed. Not long afterward, his position inside his own network was diminished. And not long after that, he was out.

Little has changed since Murrow gave that report from the battlefield and issued that call to arms. And much of what has changed has not been for the better. More people in television now than then are doing things that deny the public service of television, that ensure that the mighty weapon of television remains nothing more than "wires and lights in a box."

Even the best among decision-makers in television freely take an hour that might have been used for a documentary, and hand it over to a quote-unquote "entertainment special" about the discovery of Noah's Ark—that turns out to be a one-hundred percent *hoax*.

And the worst among the decision-makers have got us all so afraid of our own independence and integrity that at least one news director recently planned to have all his hirings

reviewed by radical ideological and highly partisan political groups. (And he bragged about it.)

There's another news director telling his staff that he didn't want stories on the Pope's visit—he wanted stories—plural—on Madonna's Sex Book. It's the ratings, stupid.

And they've got us putting more and more fuzz and wuzz on the air, cop-shop stuff, so as to compete, not with other news programs, but with entertainment programs (including those *posing* as news programs) for dead bodies, mayhem, and lurid tales.

They tell us international news doesn't get ratings, doesn't sell, and, besides, it's too expensive. "Foreign news" is considered an expletive best deleted in most local station newsrooms and has fallen from favor even among networks.

Thoughtfully-written analysis is out, "live pops" are in. Hire lookers, not writers. Do powder-puff, not probing, interviews. Stay away from controversial subjects. Kiss ass, move with the mass, and for heaven and the ratings' sake don't make anybody mad—certainly not anybody that you're covering, and especially not the mayor, the governor, the senator, the President or Vice-President or *anybody* in a position of power. Make nice, not news.

They've got us putting more and more fuzz and wuzz on the air, cop-shop stuff, so as to compete, not with other news programs, but with entertainment programs for dead bodies, mayhem, and lurid tales.

This has become the new mantra. These have become the new rules. The post-Murrow generation of owners and managers have made them so. These people are, in some cases, our friends. They are, in all cases, our bosses. They aren't venal—they're afraid. They've got education and taste and good sense, they care about their country, but you'd never know it from the things that fear makes them do—from the things that fear makes them make *us* do.

It is fear of ratings slippage if not failure, fear that this quarter's bottom line will not be better than last quarter's a year ago.

A climate of fear, at all levels, has been created, without a fight. We—you and I—have allowed them to do it, and even *helped* them to do it.

The climate is now such that, when a few people at one news organization rig the results of a test to get better pictures—and are caught and rightly criticized—there's no rejoicing that a terrible, unusual journalistic practice has been caught, punished, and eradicated. Because we all know that, with only a slight relaxation of vigilance and a slight increase of fear, those journalistic sins could be visited upon us. We know that, as honorable and sensible as we, our friends and our colleagues try to be, it could happen to us.

Now you would be absolutely justified in saying to me right now—"Excuse me, Mister Big Show Anchor Man, but what the hell do you expect me do do about it? If I go to my boss and talk about television as a weapon, and why don't you take *Current Affair* or *Hard Copy* or *Inside Edition* off the air next week and let me put on a tell-it-like-it-is documentary about race relations—I know they're gonna put me on the unemployment line, and I'll be lucky if they don't put me on the funny farm."

Well, none of us is immune to self-preservation and opportunities for advancement. I'm not asking you for

the kind of courage that risks your job, much less your whole career.

Ed Murrow had that kind of courage, and took that kind of risk several times. But you and I, reaching deep down inside ourselves, are unlikely to muster that kind of courage often, if ever.

But there are specific things we can do. They won't cost us our jobs. But they will make a difference—a start—a warning shot that the battle is about to be joined.

Number one: Make a little noise. At least question (though protest would be better) when something, anything, incompatible with your journalistic conscience is proposed. When it comes to ethics and the practice of journalism, silence is a killer.

No, you won't always be heeded or heard. And yes, even to question may be a risk. But it is a small risk, and a tiny price to pay to be worthy of the name "American journalist." To be a journalist is to ask questions. All the time. Even of the people we work for.

Number two: In any showdown between quality and substance on the one hand, and sleaze and glitz on the other, go with quality and substance. You know the difference. Every one of us knows the difference because we've been there. We've all gone Hollywood —we've all succumbed to the Hollywoodization of the news—because we were afraid not to. We trivialize important subjects. We put videotape through a Cuisinart trying to come up with high-speed, MTV-style cross-cuts. And just to cover our rear, we give the best slots to gossip and prurience.

But we can say, "No more!" We can fight the fear that leads to Showbizzification. We can *act* on our knowledge. You know that serious news—local and regional, national and international—doesn't have to be dull. People will watch serious news, well-written and well-produced. The proof—it's all around, but I'll give you two examples. Look at *Sunday Morning* and *Nightline*. No glitz, no gossip. Just compelling information. You can produce your own *Nightline* or *Sunday Morning*—all that's required of you is determination and thought, taste and imagination. That's what Tom Bettag and Ted Koppel, that's what Linda Mason, Missie Rennie, Charles Kuralt and their teams bring to work.

Number three: Try harder to get and keep minorities on the air *and* in off-camera, decision-making jobs. Try—and be determined to succeed.

I know that there are market survey researchers who will bring you confusing numbers and tell you they add up to one thing: your audience wants to see Ken and Barbie, and your audience doesn't want to see African-Americans, or Arab-Americans, or Latinos, or Asian Americans, or Gays or Lesbians, or Older Americans or Americans with Disabilities. So we give our audience plenty of Ken and Barbie, and we make the minorities we have hired, so uncomfortable that they hold back on the perspective, the experience, the intelligence, the talent that they could have offered to make us wiser and stronger.

Those market researchers, with their surveys and focus groups, are playing games with you and me and with this entire country. We actually pay them money to fool us—money that I submit to you could be better spent on news coverage. Their so-called samples of opinion are no more accurate or reliable than my grandmother's big toe was when it came to predicting the weather. Your own knowledge of news and human nature, your own idealism and professionalism will guide you more surely than any market researcher ever will. You and I know that market research can and often does cripple a newscast—pronto. But the market researchers will keep getting away with their games so long as you and I and the people we work for, let them.

If we change the voice and the face of broadcasting, honestly and fairly, on the basis of excellence and ethics, talent and intelligence, we can shatter false and cheap notions about news. We can prove that our audience wants electronic journalism that is ethical, responsible, and of high quality—and that is as diverse, as different, as dynamic as America itself.

Let's do more to think more. Let's bring all the brilliance and imagination this industry has to bear. That's what Ed Murrow was talking about. Let's phase out fear. If we've got an idea, let's not hide it out of fear—the fear of doing things differently, the fear that says, "Stay low, stay silent. They can't fire you if they don't know you're there." That fear runs rampant through the corridors of radio and television today.

If we change the voice and face of broadcasting, honestly and fairly, on the basis of excellence and ethics, talent and intelligence, we can shatter false and cheap notions about news.

The people we work for are more fearful than we are. Fear leads them to depend on thoughtless, lifeless numbers to tell them what fear convinces them are facts. "American audiences won't put up with news from other countries. Americans won't put up with economic news. Americans won't put up with serious, substantive news of any kind."

We've gone on too long believing this nonsense. We've bought the lie that Information Is Bad for News. We are told, and we are afraid to disbelieve, that people only want to be entertained. And we have gone so far down the Infotainment Trail that we'll be a long time getting back to where we started—if ever.

The more the people we work for believe this kind of nonsense, the less inclined we have been to prove them wrong. We go about our days, going along to get along. The fear factor freezes us.

The greatest shortage on every beat, in every newsroom in America, is courage.

I believe, as Ed Murrow did, that the vast majority of the owners—and executives and managers we work for are good people, responsible citizens, and patriotic Americans. I believe that the vast majority of the people at this convention also fit that description. We all know what's at stake. We know that our beloved United States of America depends on the decisions we make in our newsrooms every day.

In the end, Murrow could not bring himself to believe that the battle about which he spoke so eloquently could be won. He left the electronic journalism he helped to create believing that most, if not all, was already lost, that electronic news in America was doomed to be completely and forever overwhelmed by commercialism and entertainment values.

About that, I hope, I believe, Murrow was wrong. What is happening to us and our chosen field of work does not have to continue happening. The battle is dark and odds-against. But it is not irreversible —not yet. To prevent it from being so requires courage.

A few, just a few, good men and women with courage—the courage to practice the idealism that attracted most of us to the craft in the first place—can make a decisive difference. We need a few good men and women with the courage of their convictions to turn it around. We can be those men and women. If the people in this room simply agreed, starting tomorrow, to turn it around we would turn it around.

I don't have to tell you, you already know, but it is important for me to say

it to you anyway—I haven't always had that courage.

I said earlier that to talk about Ed Murrow before you was humbling. And perhaps that's true most of all in this respect: it is humbling to realize how little courage I have, compared to Murrow who had so much, and how many opportunities I have already wasted.

But tomorrow is a new day. We toil and are proud to be in this craft, because of the way Edward R. Murrow brought it into being. We can be worthy of him—we can share his courage, or we can continue to work in complacency and fear.

Cassius was right: "Men at some time are masters of their fates: The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves... " ■

This article is the text of a talk delivered by Dan Rather, co-anchor and managing editor of the CBS *Evening News*, at the annual convention of the Radio and Television News Directors Association in Miami in September, 1993..

"QUOTE UNQUOTE"

Television and its Potential

"Television is an all-important feature of modern life and, at the same time, an elusive target of study. One reason is that 'television' is constantly changing, and the ways that people use it change, too. In 40 years, we have gone from small black-and-white sets with a few programs watched eagerly by family and neighborhood groups, to multiple sets with color, cable systems with 30 to 100 channels, video recorders, and wall-size screens ... All of these changes have been unplanned, in the sense that public policy did little to affect them or to adapt to them. We in this country have let television follow its commercial course with little effort to use it for purposes other than entertainment.

"Our failure to realize the potential benefits of the medium is perhaps more significant than our ability to control some of its harmful effects. For several years, the nation's educational crisis has been bewailed by educators and government officials. Other countries use television to educate their children from the preschool years on. We in the U.S. could use some of the hours that children spend in front of the set to stimulate their minds, stretch their horizons, and teach them about the world."

—Big World, Small Screen,
The Role of Television in American Society, Report of A Task Force of the American Psychological Society, published 1993 by the University of Nebraska Press.

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Television Quarterly is looking for articles. We welcome contributions from readers who have something to say and know how to say it. Some of our pieces come from professional writers; others from professionals in the broadcast media who want to write about what they know best — their own field of expertise, whether it's programming, news, production, or management.

We especially want articles which deal with television's role in our complex society, and also its relationship to the new technology.

We feel too, that one of our functions can be to add to the developing history of television, particularly as told by individuals who have contributed to shaping the medium. We believe such historical articles can be valuable for much more than nostalgia since they can illuminate present and future television.

We are formally called a journal, but although some of our pieces have come from the academic community TVQ might better be described as a specialized magazine (we don't go in for complex footnotes, nor do we have peer review of contributions). But we don't consider our audience a narrow one; we like to describe ourselves as a publication for concerned professionals — writers, actors, scholars, performers, directors, technicians, producers and executives.

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