TELEVISION QUARTERLY

VOLUME XXXVI NUMBER 1 • FALL 2005

THE JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF TELEVISION ARTS AND SCIENCES

TELEVISION QUARTERLY

COVER PHOTO BY ROBIN HOLLAND © PUBLIC AFFAIRS TELEVISION
VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT: WWW.TVQUARTERLY.COM

Those who are associated with the planning of this Journal believe it is time for a penetrating, provocative and continuing examination of television as an art, a science, an industry, and a social force.

Accordingly, our purpose is to be both independent and critical. We hold that the function of this Journal is to generate currents of new ideas about television, and we will therefore try to assure publication of all material which stimulates thought and has editorial merit.

This Journal has only one aim —
to take a serious look at television.

— THE EDITORIAL BOARD

Mission statement from Volume I, Number 1 issue of *Television Quarterly*, February, 1962

A Crumbling Firewall

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting is failing to protect PBS from political pressure. **By Bill Moyers**

The following article is adapted from a speech the author gave on May 15, 2005 to the National Conference for Media Reform in St. Louis. - Ed.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting was established 40 years ago to set broad policy for public broadcasting and to be a firewall between political influence and program content. We are witnessing today an unprecedented partisan effort from within CPB itself to dismantle that firewall and undermine the independence of public broadcasting's journalists and producers.

The assault is being led by right-wing chairman of CPB, Kenneth Y. Tomlinson, who is enacting a contemporary version of the age-old ambition of power and ideology to squelch and discredit those who tell the stories that make princes and priests uncomfortable.

I am at the moment the poster boy of their antipathy, for reasons that I will discuss later. They have not given up demonizing me although I retired six months ago. They have been after me for years and will no doubt be stomping on my grave when I am gone to make sure that I don't come back from the dead. I should put my detractors on notice: They might just compel me out of the rocking chair and back into the anchor chair.

Who are they? They are people obsessed with control, seeking to consolidate one-party rule in America, silence dissenters, and consolidate their ideology into the official view of reality from which any deviation becomes unpatriotic heresy.

That's who they are. And if that's editorializing, so be it. A free press is one where it's okay to state the conclusion you're led to by the evidence.

Now for the evidence.

One reason I am their target of the day is because my colleagues and I did not produce *NOW with Bill Moyers* by the conventional rules of beltway journalism. Those rules divide the world into Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, and allow journalists to pretend they have done their job if, instead of reporting the truth behind the news, they merely give each side an opportunity to spin the news and stop there.

In a recent issue of *World Policy Journal*, Jonathan Mermin explores

Bill Moyers at the podium.

why the deep interests of the American people are so poorly served by beltway journalism. One of his witnesses is David Ignatius of the *Washington Post*, who acknowledges that the "rules of our game make it hard for us to tee up an issue...without a news peg." Case in point: the debacle of America's occupation of Iraq. "If Senator so and so hasn't criticized post-war planning for Iraq," says Ignatius, "then it's hard for a reporter to write a story about that."

Mermin's next witness is Jim Lehrer of PBS, who has acknowledged that unless an official says something is so, it isn't news. Why were journalists not discussing the occupation of Iraq? Because, says Lehrer, "the word occupation...was never mentioned in the run-up to the war." Instead, Washington talked about the invasion as "a war of liberation, not a war of occupation." As a consequence, "those of us in journalism never even looked at the issue of occupation."

"In other words," says Jonathan Mermin, "if the government isn't talking about it, we don't report it." He concludes, "[Lehrer's] somewhat jarring declaration, one of many recent admissions by journalists that their reporting failed to prepare the public for the calamitous occupation that has followed the 'liberation' of Iraq, reveals just how far the actual practice of American journalism has deviated from the First Amendment ideal of a press that is independent of the government."

Take the example (also cited by Mermin) of Charles J. Hanley. Hanley is a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter for the Associated Press, whose Fall 2003 story on the torture of Iraqis in American prisons – before a U.S. Army report and photographs documenting the abuse surfaced – was ignored by major American newspapers. Hanley attributes this lack of interest to the fact that "it was not an officially sanctioned story that begins with a handout from

an official source." Furthermore, Iraqis recounting their own personal experience of Abu Ghraib simply did not have the credibility with beltway journalists of American officials denying that such things happened. Judith Miller of *The New York Times*, among others, relied on the "credibility" of official but unnamed sources when she served essentially as the government stenographer for claims that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction.

These "rules of the game" permit Washington officials to set the agenda for journalism, leaving the press all too often simply to recount what officials say instead of subjecting their words and deeds to critical scrutiny. Rather than act as filters for readers and viewers, sifting the facts from the propaganda, reporters and anchors attentively transcribe both sides of the spin invariably failing to provide context, background or any sense of which claims hold up and which are misleading.

I decided long ago that this isn't healthy for democracy. One of my mentors had told me that "news is what people want to keep hidden and everything else is publicity." Sure enough, in producing documentaries on the Watergate scandals 30 years ago, the Iran Contra conspiracy 20 years ago, Bill Clinton's fund-raising scandals 10 years ago, or five years ago, the chemical industry's long and despicable cover-up of its cynical withholding from the workers of critical data about its toxic products, I realized that investigative journalism could not be a collaboration between the journalist and the subject. Objectivity is not satisfied by two opposing sources offering competing opinions, leaving the viewer to split the difference. The journalist is obliged to go beyond the self-serving claims of competing advocates or detractors to get as close as possible to the verifiable truth.

I also came to believe that objective journalism means describing the object being reported on, including the little fibs and fantasies as well as the Big Lie of the people in power. In no way does this license journalists to make accusations and allegations. It means, instead, making sure that your reporting and your conclusions can be nailed to the post with confirming evidence.

This is always hard to do, but it has never been harder than today. Without a trace of irony, the powers-that-be have appropriated the Newspeak vernacular of George Orwell's *1984*. They give us a program vowing "No Child Left Behind" while cutting funds for educating disadvantaged kids. They give us legislation cheerily calling for "Clear Skies" and "Healthy Forests" that give us neither. And that's just for starters.

In Orwell's *1984*, the character Syme, one of the writers of that totalitarian society's dictionary, explains to the protagonist Winston, "Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought?" "Has it ever occurred to you, Winston, that by the year 2050, at the very latest, not a single human being will be alive who could understand such a conversation as we are having now? The whole climate of thought, "will be different. In fact there will be no thought, as we understand it now. Orthodoxy means not thinking – not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness."

An unconscious people, an

indoctrinated people, a people fed only on partisan information and opinion that confirm their own bias, a people made morbidly obese in mind and spirit by the junk food of propaganda, is less inclined to put up a fight, to ask questions and be skeptical. Such benumbed compliance can stifle democracy.

I learned about this the hard way. I grew up in the South, where the truth about slavery, race, and segregation had been driven from the pulpits, from the classrooms and from the newsrooms. It took a bloody Civil War to drive the truth home and then it took another hundred years for the truth to make us free.

Then I served in the Johnson administration. Imbued with cold-war orthodoxy and confident that "might makes right," we circled the wagons, listened only to each other, and pursued policies the evidence couldn't carry. The results were devastating for Vietnamese and Americans.

I brought this awareness to the challenge PBS executives offered me after 9/11 to start a new weekly broadcast. They wanted it to be different from anything else on the air. They urged us to tell stories no one else was reporting and to offer a venue to people who might not otherwise be heard. That wasn't a hard sell. I had been deeply impressed by studies published in leading peer-reviewed scholarly journals by a team of researchers led by Vassar College sociologist William Hoynes. Extensive research on the content of public television over a decade found that political discussions on our public-affairs programs generally included a limited set of voices that offer a narrow range of perspectives on current issues and events. Instead of far-ranging discussions and debates, the kind that might engage viewers as citizens, not simply as audiences, this research found that public-affairs programs on PBS stations were populated by the standard set of elite news sources. Whether government officials and Washington journalists (talking about political strategy) or corporate sources (talking about stock prices or the economy from the investor's viewpoint), public television had settled into offering the same kind of discussions and a similar brand of insider discourse that is featured regularly on commercial television.

Public Television had settled into offering the same kind of discussions and a similar brand of insider discourse that is featured regularly on commercial television...The Public Broadcasting Act was meant to provide an alternative to commercial television and to reflect the diversity of the American people.

Who didn't appear was also revealing. Hoynes and his collaborators found that in contrast to the conservative mantra that public television routinely featured the voices of anti-establishment critics, "alternative perspectives are rare on public television, and are effectively drowned out by the stream of government, expert, and corporate views that represent the vast majority of

sources on public television programs." The so-called "experts" who got most of the face time came primarily from mainstream news organizations and Washington think tanks rather than diverse interests. Economic news, for example, was almost entirely refracted through the views of business people, investors and business journalists. Voices outside the corporate/Wall Street universe—nonprofessional workers, labor representatives, consumer advocates and the general public – were rarely heard. In sum, these two studies concluded, the economic coverage was so narrow that the views and the activities of most citizens became irrelevant.

All this went against the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 that created the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. I know. I was there. As a young policy assistant to President Johnson in 1964, I attended my first meeting to discuss the future of public broadcasting in the office of the Commissioner of Education. I know firsthand that the Public Broadcasting Act was meant to provide an alternative to commercial television and to reflect the diversity of the American people.

This, too, was on my mind when we assembled the team for *NOW*. It was just after the terrorist attacks. We agreed on two priorities. First, we wanted to do our part to keep the conversation of democracy going. That meant talking to a wide range of people across the spectrum – left, right and center. It meant poets, philosophers, politicians, scientists, sages and scribblers. It meant Isabel AlIende, the novelist, and Amity Shlaes, the columnist for the *Financial Times.* It meant the former nun and best-selling author Karen Armstrong, and it meant the right-wing evangelical columnist, Cal Thomas. It meant Arundhati Roy from India, Doris Lessing from London, David Suzuki from Canada, and Bernard-Henri Levy from Paris. It also meant two successive editors of *The Wall Street Journal*, Robert Bartley and Paul Gigot, the editor of *The Economist*, Bill Emmott, *The Nation's* Katrina vanden Heuvel and the *Los Angeles Weekly's* John Powers.

It means liberals like Ossie Davis and Gregory Nava, and conservatives like Frank Gaffney, Grover Norquist and Richard Viguerie. It meant Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Bishop Wilton Gregory of the Catholic Bishops Conference. It meant the conservative Christian activist and lobbyist Ralph Reed, and the dissident Catholic Sister Joan Chittister. We threw the conversation open to all comers. Most of those who came responded in the spirit of Representative Ron Paul, the Republican and Libertarian congressman from Texas who wrote following his appearance to say, "I have received hundreds of positive e-mails from your viewers. I appreciate the format of your program which allows time for a full discussion of ideas. I'm tired of political shows featuring two guests shouting over each other and offering the same arguments. *NOW* was truly refreshing."

We had a second priority. We intended to do independent and accurate reporting, telling stories people in high places would prefer to keep hidden.

This seemed all the more imperative in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks. America could be entering a long war against an elusive and stateless enemy

with no definable measure of victory and no limit to its duration, cost or foreboding fear. The rise of a homeland security state meant government could justify extraordinary measures in exchange for protecting citizens against unnamed, even unproven, threats.

"Real news is the news you and I need to keep our freedoms."

Furthermore, increased spending during a national emergency can produce a spectacle of corruption behind a smokescreen of secrecy. I reminded our team of the words of the news photographer in Tom Stoppard's play *Night and Day*: "People do awful things to each other, but it's worse when everyone is kept in the dark."

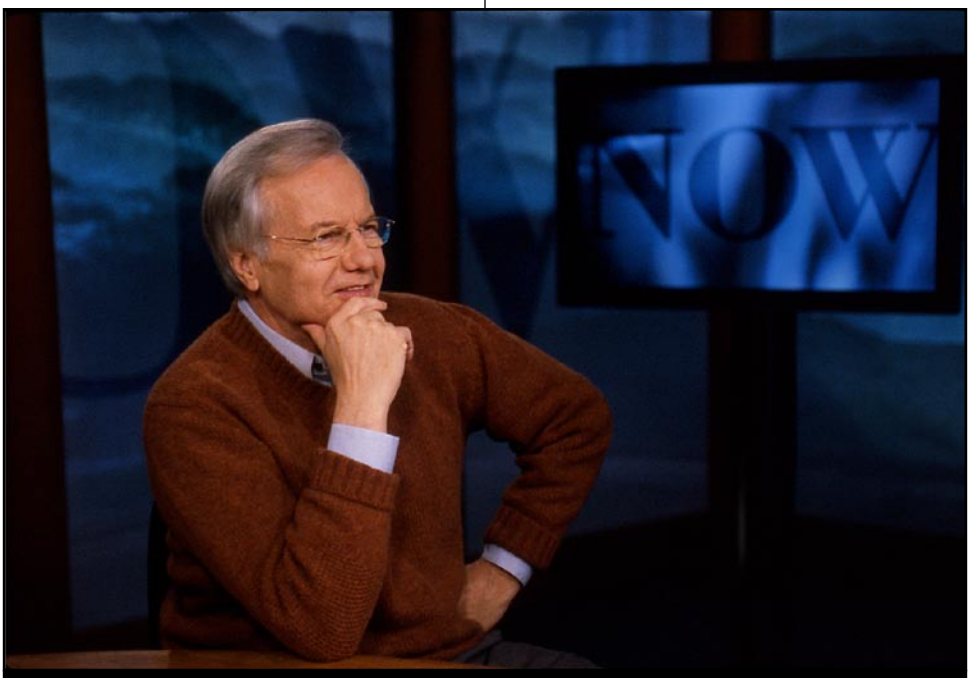
I also reminded them of how the correspondent and historian, Richard Reeves, answered a student who asked him to define real news. "Real news," Reeves responded, "is the news you and I need to keep our freedoms."

So we went about reporting on Washington as no one else in broadcasting was doing. We reported on the expansion of the Justice Department's power of surveillance. We reported on the escalating Pentagon budget and expensive weapons that didn't work. We reported on how campaign contributions influenced legislation to skew resources to the comfortable and well-connected while our troops were fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq with inadequate training and armor. We reported on how the administration was shredding the Freedom of Information Act. We went around the country to report on how closed-door deals in Washington were costing ordinary workers and taxpayers their livelihood and security. We reported on offshore tax havens that enable wealthy and powerful Americans to avoid their fair share of national security and the social contract.

And always – because what people know depends on who owns the press – we kept coming back to the media business itself, to how megamedia corporations were pushing journalism further and further down the hierarchy of values, how giant radio cartels were silencing critics while shutting communities off from essential information, and how the megamedia companies were lobbying the FCC for the right to grow ever more powerful.

The broadcast caught on. Our ratings grew every year. There was a time when we were the only public-affairs program on PBS whose audience was going up instead of down. TV critics gave us two-thumbs up.

But as we were generating a larger audience and more attention, something was happening in Washington that only a handful of our team, including my wife, partner, and executive editor Judith Davidson Moyers, knew at the time. The success of *NOW's* journalism was creating a backlash among the powers-that-be. The more compelling our journalism, the angrier the radical right of the governing party grew. That's because the one thing that they loathe more than liberals is the truth. Unable to refute the truth, they "libel by label" –spouting mindless clichés to evoke from their followers the red-meat response that characterizes the right-wing movement today. Journalism equals liberalism, according to Ken Tomlinson's mantra, and investigative reporting is dismissed as "liberal



Bill Moyers on the set of *NOW*.

advocacy." Your constituency is inoculated against the fallout from the facts if they can be aroused to a Pavlovian response to the fact-gatherer.

Idealogues of course embrace a worldview that can't be proven wrong because they will admit no evidence to the contrary. They want reporting to validate their belief system, and when it doesn't, God forbid. Never mind that their own stars were getting a fair shake on *NOW*: Gigot, Viguerie, Norquist, David Keene, Stephen Moore, among others. No, our reporting was giving the Radical Right fits because we didn't arrange the evidence to fit the party line. It wasn't that we were getting it wrong. Only three times in three years did we err factually, and in each case we corrected those errors as soon as we confirmed their inaccuracy. The problem was that we were getting it right, not right-wing. We were reporting the stories that partisans in power didn't want told.

My occasional commentaries got to them as well. Although apparently he never watched the broadcast (I guess he couldn't take the diversity), Senator Trent Lott came out squealing like a stuck pig when, after the mid-term elections in 2002, I described what was likely to happen now that all three branches of government were about to be controlled by one party dominated by the religious, corporate and political right. Instead of congratulating the winners for their election victory as some network broadcasters had done – or celebrating their victory as Fox, *The Washington Times, The Weekly Standard*, talk radio and other partisan Republican journalists had done – I provided a little independent analysis of what the victory meant. And I did it the old fashioned way: I looked at the record, took the winners at their word,

and drew the logical conclusion that they would use power as they always said they would.

Events since then I have confirmed the accuracy of what I said, but, to repeat, being right is exactly what the right doesn't want journalists to be.

Strange things began to happen. Friends in Washington called to say that they had heard of muttered threats that the PBS reauthorization would be held off "unless Moyers is dealt with."

When Senator Lott protested that the Corporation for Public Broadcasting "has not seemed willing to deal with Bill Moyers," a new member of the board, a Republican fundraiser named Cheryl Halperin, who had been appointed by President Bush, agreed that CPB needed more power to do just that sort of thing. She left no doubt about the kind of penalty she would like to see imposed on malefactors like Moyers.

As rumors circulated about all this, I asked to meet with the CPB board to hear for myself what was being said. I thought it would be helpful for someone who had been present at the creation and part of the system for almost 40 years, to explain how CPB had been created as a heat shield to protect public broadcasters from exactly this kind of intimidation. After all, I'd been there at the time of Richard Nixon's attempted coup. In those days, public television had been really feisty and independent, and often targeted for attacks. A Woody Allen special that poked fun at Henry Kissinger in the Nixon administration had actually been cancelled. The White House had been so outraged over a documentary called *The Banks and the Poor* that PBS was driven to adopt new guidelines. That didn't satisfy Nixon, and when public television hired two NBC reporters – Robert MacNeil and Sander Vanocur – to co-anchor some new broadcasts, it was, for Nixon, the last straw. According to White House memos at the time, he was determined to "get the left-wing commentators who are cutting us up off public television at once – indeed, yesterday if possible."

Sound familiar?

Nixon vetoed the authorization for CPB with a message written in part by his sidekick Pat Buchanan who in a private memo had castigated Vanocur, MacNeil, *Washington Week in Review, Black Journal* and Bill Moyers as "unbalanced against the administration."

It does sound familiar.

Buchanan and Nixon succeeded in cutting CPB funding for all public-affairs programming except for *Black Journal*. They knocked out multiyear funding for the National Public Affairs Center for Television, otherwise known as NPACT. And they voted to take away from the PBS staff the ultimate responsibility for the production of programming.

I guess I was naïve. I simply never imagined that any CPB chairman, Democrat or Republican, would cross the line from resisting White House pressure to applying it for the White House. But that's what Kenneth Tomlinson did. Of course he denied that he was carrying out a White House mandate or that he's ever had any conversations with any Bush administration official about PBS. But *The New York Times* reported that Tomlinson talked to Karl Rove before successfully killing a proposal that would have put on the CPB board people with experience in local radio and television. The *Times* also

reported that "on the recommendation of administration officials" Tomlinson hired a White House flack named Mary Catherine Andrews as a senior CPB staff member. While she was still reporting to Karl Rove at the White House, Andrews set up CPB's new ombudsman's office and had a hand in hiring the two people who will fill it. One of them is another right-wing warrior who once worked for… you guessed it … Kenneth Tomlinson.

I would like to give Mr. Tomlinson the benefit of the doubt, but I can't. According to a book written about the *Reader's Digest* when he was its Editor-in-Chief, he surrounded himself with other right-wingers – a pattern he's now following at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. There is Ms. Andrews from the White House. For Acting President he hired Ken Ferree from the FCC, who was Michael Powell's enforcer when Powell was deciding how to go about allowing the big media companies to get even bigger. According to a forthcoming book, one of Ferree's jobs was to engage in tactics designed to dismiss any serious objection to media monopolies. According to Eric Alterman, Ferree was even more contemptuous than Michael Powell of public participation in the process of determining media ownership. Alterman identifies Ferree as the FCC staffer who decided to issue a 'protective order' designed to keep secret the market research on which the Republican majority on the commission based their vote to permit greater media consolidation. [Ferree was subsequently succeeded as president of CPB by Patricia Harrison, former co-chair of the Republican National Committee.]

It's not likely that with people like this running the CPB some public television producer is going to say, "Hey, let's do something on how big media is affecting democracy."

Call it preventive capitulation.

As everyone knows, Mr. Tomlinson also put up a considerable sum of CPB money, reportedly over five million dollars, for a new weekly broadcast featuring Paul Gigot and the editorial board of *The Wall Street Journal.* Gigot is a smart journalist, a sharp editor, and a fine fellow. I had him on *NOW* several times and even proposed that he become a regular contributor. The conversation of democracy – remember? All stripes.

I thought public television was supposed to be an alternative to commercial media, not a funder of it.

But I confess to some puzzlement that *The Wall Street Journal,* which in the past editorialized to cut PBS off the public tap, is now being subsidized by American taxpayers although its parent company, Dow Jones, had revenues in just the first quarter of this year of 400 million dollars.

I thought public television was supposed to be an alternative to commercial media, not a funder of it.

But in this weird deal, you get a glimpse of the kind of "fair and balanced" programming Mr. Tomlinson apparently seems to prefer. Alone of the big major newspapers, *The Wall Street Journal* has no op-ed page where different opinions can compete with its right- wing editorials. The *Journal's* PBS broadcast is just as homogenous —ideological soul-mates talking to

each other under the guidance of their boss. Why not $5 million to put the editors of *The Nation* on PBS? Or Amy Goodman's *Democracy Now!* Why not balance right-wing talk with left-wing talk?

There's more. We then learned that Mr. Tomlinson had spent $10,000 to hire a contractor who would monitor my show and report on political bias. That's right. Kenneth Y. Tomlinson spent $10,000 of your money to hire a guy to watch *NOW* to find out who my guests were and what my stories were.

Gee, Ken, for $2.50 a week, you could pick up a copy of *TV Guide* on the newsstand. A subscription is even cheaper, and I would have sent you a coupon that can save you up to 62%.

For that matter, Ken, all you had to do was watch the show yourself. Or you could have gone online where the listings are posted. Hell, you could have called me – collect – and I would have told you what was on the broadcast that night.

Ten thousand dollars. That would have bought five tables at the recent Conservative Salute for Tom DeLay. Better yet, that ten grand would pay for the books in an elementary school classroom or an upgrade of its computer lab.

But having spent that cash, what did he find? Only Mr. Tomlinson knows. He apparently decided not to share the results with his staff or his board or leak it to Robert Novak. The public paid for it – but Ken Tomlinson acts as if he owns it. [Subsequent Congressional demands untimately forced Kenneth Tomlinson to release the raw data of the report – Ed.]

In an op-ed piece in Reverend Moon's conservative *Washington Times*, Mr. Tomlinson maintained he had not released the findings because public broadcasting is such a delicate institution he did not want to "damage public broadcasting's image with controversy." Where I come from in Texas, we shovel that kind of stuff every day.

That's not the only news Mr. Tomlinson tried to keep to himself. As reported by Jeff Chester's Center for Digital Democracy, there were two public-opinion surveys commissioned by CPB but not released to the media – not even to PBS and NPR! According to a source who talked to Salon.com, "the first results were too good and [Tomlinson] didn't believe them. After the Iraq war, the board commissioned another round of polling and they thought they'd get worse results."

But they didn't.

The data revealed, contrary to what Mr. Tomlinson and his allies were touting, that public broadcasting has an 80% favorable rating and that "the majority of the U.S. adult population does not believe that the news and information programming on public broadcasting is biased."

In fact, more than half believed PBS was "fair and balanced" and provided more in-depth and trustworthy news and information than the networks.

I repeat: I would like to have given Mr. Tomlinson the benefit of the doubt. But this is the man who was running the *Voice of America* back in 1984 when a partisan named Charlie Wick was politicizing the United States Information Agency, where Voice of America was based. It turned out there was a blacklist of people who had been removed from the list of

prominent Americans sent abroad to lecture on behalf of America and the USIA. What's more, it was discovered that evidence as to how those people were chosen to be on the blacklist – more than 700 documents – had been shredded. Among those on the lists of journalists, writers, scholars and politicians were dangerous left-wing subversives like Walter Cronkite, James Baldwin, Gary Hart, Ralph Nader, Ben Bradley, Coretta Scott King and David Brinkley.

The person who took the fall for the blacklist was another right-winger. He resigned. Shortly thereafter, Kenneth Tomlinson, who had been one of the people in the agency with the authority to see the lists of potential speakers and allowed to strike people's names, also left the agency.

Let me be clear about this: there is no record of what Ken Tomlinson did. We don't know whether he supported or protested the blacklisting of so many American liberals. Or what he thinks of it now.

But I had hoped Bill O'Reilly would have asked Mr. Tomlinson about it when he appeared on *The O'Reilly Factor*. He didn't. Instead, egged on by O'Reilly, Tomlinson went on attacking me while denying that he was carrying out a partisan mandate despite published evidence to the contrary. The only time you could be sure he was telling the truth was at the end of the broadcast when he said to O'Reilly, "We love your show."

"*We love your show.*" Maybe he will put up public funds to move O'Reilly to PBS – to balance Barney.

I wrote Kenneth Tomlinson the other day and asked him to sit down with me for one hour on PBS and talk about all this. I suggested that he choose the moderator and the guidelines.

In Kenneth Tomlinson's world, big money talks and can silence the voices that offend the powers that be.

There is one other thing in particular I would like to ask him about. In his op-ed essay in *The Washington Times*, Mr. Tomlinson tells of a phone call from an old friend complaining about my bias. Wrote Mr. Tomlinson: "The friend explained that the foundation he heads made a six-figure contribution to his local television station for digital conversion. But he declared there would be no more contributions until something was done about the network's bias."

In Kenneth Tomlinson's world, big money talks and can silence the voices that offend the powers that be.

If he had accepted my offer to discuss these matters with me, I would have told him of a different public television viewer. I would have read him the letter written to me by a woman in New York who described how her husband, the captain of a fire company in New York, had died on 9/11. She told how he was off duty when the news came after the first plane had struck the North Tower of the World Trade Center and of how he "took off like a lightening bolt" to be with his men and how he never came back. She recounted the times the two of them had watched public television in their home on Staten Island. And she said that since his death she had become a faithful viewer of *NOW* and other programs that search for reality amidst "a sea of false images." Without

public broadcasting, she concluded, "all we would call news would be merely carefully controlled propaganda."

Enclosed with the letter was a check made out to "Channel 13–*NOW*" for $500.

I keep a copy of that check above my desk to remind me of that journalism still matters.

Kenneth Tomlinson has his demanding donors with their big bucks wanting to keep the uncomfortable facts off the air.

I'll take the widow's mite any day.

Someone remarked recently that a chasm has opened between those of us in this business and those who depend on television and radio as their window to the world. We treat them too often as an audience and not enough as citizens. They are invited to look through the window but rarely to come through the door to participate – to make public broadcasting truly public.

We broadcasters are supposed to be big kids, able to handle controversy and diversity, whether it's political or religious points of view or two loving lesbian moms and their kids, visited by a cartoon rabbit. We are not so fragile or insecure that we can't see America and the world for all their magnificent and sometimes violent confusion. We would do well to remember something John Steinbeck once wrote: "There used to be a thing or a commodity we put great store by. It was called the people."

Kenneth Tomlinson, take note.

During his long career in broadcast journalism, Bill Moyers has been recognized as one of the unique voices of his generation. Winner of more than 30 Emmy Awards, nine Peabody Awards, three George Polk Awards and two Alfred I. DuPont/Columbia University Awards, he is the author, most recently, of *Moyers on America: A Journalist and His Times.*

Television Quarterly *invited Mr. Tomlinson to comment on this article and on the article which follows. He declined to do so. - Ed.*

Why All That On-Air Begging?

A local public-TV station manager says former CPB chairman compromised the system's editorial integrity.

By Jan B. Jacobson

When Jack Parris started in public television in 1954 as a student worker at KUON TV in Lincoln, Nebraska, he did it all, from running the camera and directing to serving as on-air talent, all for just one dollar an hour. He worked at a station that didn't even have its own studio.

As this multiply honored veteran of 51 years in broadcasting approaches retirement he fondly recalls his "great ride" but he is clearly worried about the future of public broadcasting, a medium in which he spent nearly half of his career and where he still labors.

"In the early days at KUON, we were inventing television," Parris recalls. "We used the studios at our neighboring commercial station, KOLN, in the afternoons, to do our programming, There were no video tapes and it was all just black and white."

Two university instructors, Jack McBride and Ron Hull—both of whom went on to national prominence in public broadcasting—were instrumental in getting him into the television business. Following his graduation from the University of Nebraska, Jack took a "32-year detour" from educational broadcasting to work in commercial television. He was a producer and director at KETV and KMTV in Omaha and WJRT in Flint, Michigan. He later worked as a station manager and program manager for KMEG in Sioux City, Iowa and as Vice President and General Manager for KGUN in Tucson.

"When I began working in television, there was educational TV, no PBS as we know it today. National Education Television (NET) came into being during the 50s. In the following decade, with the introduction of videotape and color, educational TV took a great leap and went through many changes."

In 1988, Parris returned to educational television at the University of Arizona in Tucson, Arizona, as Assistant General Manager for KUAT Video Services, a post he held for 10 years. He was promoted to CEO, Director and General Manager of KUAT's Communications Group in July, 1998, where he remains today.

Public Versus Commercial Broadcasting

"It was an interesting transition," he recalls. "A lot of things were similar between commercial and public television, such as the cameras, microphones, engineering, transmitters and microwaves. One thing stood out for me in commercial broadcasting: there was a sales force to sell commercials. In public television, our focus was on fund raising, which we did through memberships and development. We asked our members to support our station. through our pledge drives, and that has not changed."

As General Manager, Parris was in the position of asking for major gifts. In fact, it was part of his job. Parris was quick to point out that the mission of public broadcasting is dramatically different from commercial broadcasting.

"Commercial stations seek to attract viewers and in turn attract advertisers. We at public television try to respond to viewers and reflect it in programming, We do not look at or worry about ratings in the same way. Rather, we assess how our programming is doing."

Jack Parris, winner of an Emmy among many other honors.

they want to view.

"We ask members for their opinions, through our communications and solicitations and get phone calls and written feedback. Senior management looks at the information received, to try and identify any trends. That is what we pay attention to. "

The people are yet another big difference Parris sites, between the commercial and public broadcasting stations.

"Although I have worked with and had wonderful and talented people in commercial broadcasting, they are much more transient. In public television, the staff stays for many years, and are generally here because they believe in the mission of public broadcasting. At KUAT, we have many staffers who have worked here for 20 to 25 years, because they are proud of what they do and want to stay." He added, that remuneration at PBS stations is not terrific, but the workers truly enjoy what they are doing.

In public broadcasting the staff stays for many years because they believe in its mission.

He added, "At our station, KUAT, we try to be an alternative to what is offered by commercial television. We strive to provide educational and cultural programs that are not available in other places, and to attract audiences who ask for this programming."

Parris points out that PBS stations seek input from their members on what

KUAT/ Michael Serres

PBS Station Challenges

Parris openly admits that the introduction and expansion of cable television has made it more competitive for his station and other PBS affiliates.

"Digital technology offers a great opportunity for public television stations to do more!"

"Many say public broadcasting is not needed anymore, because there are now Discovery and History channels … but it's just not true! We are providing a service by doing innovative programming that others are not."

Like other local PBS stations, Parris's station purchases some of its schedule from PBS, others through distributors, and also does its own creative programming. They produce a nightly newscast five nights a week and offer bilingual programming.

Their flagship program, *The Desert Speaks,* is the only nationally syndicated program produced from Tucson, Arizona and the first and only one done from Tucson in high definition.

The Desert Speaks, an Emmy Award-winning program, is currently in its 15th season. It takes KUAT about a year to shoot these programs. Their next project is photographing the deserts of Australia. While the show is costly to produce, since it requires extensive travels annually, it is what sets this PBS station apart from other public and educational stations. The money generated from the show's distribution through American Public TV supports general funding of the station. The show has also been sold to HD Net and Discovery HD Theatre.

Parris has witnessed many changes during his career in public broadcasting.

"We've gone from no videotape to tape and now record on servers with digital technology. I expect the technology improvements to continue and that we'll be recording on things not yet invented." Parris projected.

Parris oversaw the launch of the first digital television system in Southern Arizona at KUAS- DT.

"Digital technology offers more opportunities to do more programming and other things like data and wireless transmission and others. It offers a great opportunity for public television stations to do more!"

Parris notes that funding issues have been an ongoing struggle for PBS stations.

Our funding continues to decline. We are basically living from year to year.

"There has been a long period of budget cuts from both the state and federally, some minor, and others sizable. Overall, our funding continues to decline. We no longer have any cushion in our funding. We are basically living from year to year. "

State and federal cuts have a tremendous impact on public stations like KUAT. For KUAT, such cuts significantly impact their bottom line, as federal funding accounts for nearly 15% of their total budget and state funding represents about 25% of the budget.

"We have been forced to go back to our members to support us, to make up the difference," he added, " and

The boss frequently serves as an on-air talent during KUAT's pledge drives.

KUAT/Michael Serres

fortunately, to date, they have stepped up to help. They are loyal and kind to us, because they appreciate our programming. I honestly don't know how much longer we can expect our members to do this."

Funding is an ongoing challenge to KUAT because there are few large businesses and corporations with headquarters in Southern Arizona to support them.

"We are going to continue our members' funding and begin a major gifts program, to identify major givers, individuals and foundations. This is a new area of development we haven't done before. We are hopeful this will help us offset future declines in state and federal funding."

Parris recalls having to make layoffs in 2001, soon after 9/11, because of a decline in funding.

"We always try to protect our local programs like *Arizona Illustrated* and *The Desert Speaks,* as they set us apart. We also do political specials and cover health issues. These shows are about localism, which is our first priority. It is our goal to be a good neighbor in our community."

Funding issues have also had a tremendous impact on national PBS programming service.

"Nationally, PBS is going through similar reductions in their fund raising, as our local stations and their costs keep increasing, We must buy programs from PBS, and the costs to us are now higher. It's really a balancing act."

He explained, that due to funding reductions, and the increased cost of purchased programs, his station now often runs these programs more than once.

"Today's viewers are so busy and are often not available when a show airs," he says. "We are finding that the strong shows continue to get good ratings doing it this way."

PBS stations were caught by surprise when the House of Representatives recently tried to cut $100 million. of public broadcasting funding for both radio and television for 2006. PBS forces joined together and the public was informed of the proposed cut through a grass-roots campaign run by the Association of Public Television Stations.

"When budgets are tight, or we offend someone, de-funding public broadcasting comes up," Parris says. "Attempts to de-fund public broadcasting have become a way of life for us. Many believe that public funds shouldn't go to public broadcasting. Fortunately, we have strong and loyal audiences who understand the value of public broadcasting, who have come forward and told Congress how important it is to them."

"CPB was established to insulate public broadcasting from political pressure. Chairman Tomlinson has brought into question the editorial integrity of public broadcasting."

The $100 million funding was restored and is earmarked for public broadcasting, to provide annual grants to local stations, which allows them to pay for PBS programming and for local programs.

Still another $100 million of funding is resting in the hands of the Senate. PBS and its affiliates are hoping it too will be reinstated. This $100 million is comprised of $39 million for public television satellite internet connections, another $39 million for digital conversions and the balance is for outreach programs, like *Ready to Learn* and grants to fund popular PBS educational shows like *Reading Rainbow* and *Sesame Street.*

Parris explained that the federal funding issue comes up periodically. He recalls that similar attempts were made in 1995 to zero out funding for PBS, but it was saved.

When asked what can be done to stop the federal funding battle, Parris said, "Discussions have been held since the 1960s about establishing a 'trust' fund, that would support the operation of public broadcasting. This fund would have a large principal and the interest would be used by local stations. This would take funding control away from the Senate and Congress.

He added, "The Corporation for Public Broadcasting clearly isn't working well anymore. There's a lot of politics involved. Perhaps it's time to seriously explore a different model."

When asked his opinion of acting chairman Kenneth Tomlinson's attitude toward the system's independence, Parris commented:

"The Corporation for Public Broadcasting was established to insulate public broadcasting from the political pressure. We have a situation now that the organization charged to protect us is actually introducing political pressure into public broadcasting. Public broadcasting's editorial integrity is extremely important to us. "

He added, "We must have the confidence of our viewers and listeners that we are making programming decisions free of any kind of pressure from the outside. If our audiences don't believe that, we will lose them. CPB Chairman Tomlinson's recent actions have brought into question the editorial integrity of public broadcasting and that is harmful to the system. "

What's ahead for PBS? "I'm hopeful that public television will look at itself, at the model it's been using for the last 30 years. The model needs to be retooled and become stronger in programming and service to the community. What's been going on is not the best way to run a system."

Parris believes local stations have a vital role in public television's future.

"Local PBS stations have to continue striving to improve our mission, to provide value to the community and offer local programs that make our communities better for our viewers. Public stations are a valuable asset to communities, a resource for education and culture. "

He suggests that the public plays an integral part in the medium's future.

"The public needs to continually give congressmen input of their views regarding public television. The message should be that when federal funding is provided, it impacts our local stations. Members of Congress need to realize that when they try or make national funding cuts, it translates to local stations and impacts those in their own communities."

Jan Jacobson, an internationally published photojournalist and author of books on photography, is past president and a national trustee of the Rocky Mountain Southwest Chapter of the National Television Academy, She is the host and producer of *Valley Focus*, a weekly public-affairs radio show that airs on five stations in Phoenix, Arizona.

Backstage Secrets

Veteran director Kirk Browning reveals the magic of converting music to pictures for *Live from Lincoln Center*. **By Greg Vitiello**

Dressed in a Mostly Mozart T-shirt, director Kirk Browning looks up from his shooting script and begins humming the first bars of Mozart's Haffner Symphony. "That's how it goes, but twice as fast as this," he tells the production crew in the sound truck adjacent to New York's Avery Fisher Hall. "Fast, fast, fast."

Scanning the row of eight television monitors, each marked with its cameraman's name, Browning elaborates: "This is like chamber music," he says. "I want to see a lot of faces. Nothing abstract. Let's see all the different faces."

As the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra begins its rehearsal, assistant director Alan Skag calls out the shots from Browning's script, alerting each camera to its place in the visual queue. "Ready 4, tight cello…48 ready, dissolve to 3," Skag chants, while music associate Howard Heller follows each prompt with the word "And," bringing up the particular camera shot. Intermittently, Browning joins their dialogue to suggest a change: "On the bass shots, get two or three of them – get more energy. They don't have to all be in the piece."

The camera comes in tight on two bass players, then cuts to an array of string players, before panning and pulling back to a wide shot of artistic director and conductor Louis Langrée and his orchestra. The camera movement is as brisk as the music from the Haffner Symphony that will lead off this opening night concert from the 39th Mostly Mozart Festival.

"I'm using the camera to represent to the eye what the ear is hearing," Browning explains. "I think the psyche is equipped with a visual sense that is in motion. I know that sounds a little kookie because your eye doesn't have a zoom lens, but your interest, your commitment has a zoom lens. And I think that if a camera moves logically, you can keep it in constant motion and represent the way you feel about the material."

Watching the broadcast – in a sound truck or in our homes – we quickly become connected to the musicians and appreciate the interplay between them. It is this blend of intimacy and energy that helps to distinguish the productions of PBS' *Live from Lincoln Center,* the award-winning series currently in its 30th year. As conceived by executive producer John Goberman, the series draws upon Lincoln Center's rich musical and dance repertoire to present live broadcasts with a technical

flair and fluidity designed to engage audiences. This opening-night concert is a case in point: It features the brilliant soprano Renée Fleming in arias by Handel and Mozart, pianist Stephen Hough playing works by Mozart and Rameau, and the orchestra performing symphonies by Mozart and J.C. Bach. The concert also presents two "firsts" – a new stage configuration thrust 30 feet forward from the traditional stage and surrounded by spectators, and a program presented in the style of Mozart's day, with movements of the Haffner Symphony interspersed among the other works.

Clearly, this concert will not be business as usual, but then the *Lincoln Center* production is adept at dealing with the unexpected. In fact, Goberman feels audiences are stimulated by the "aesthetics of risk" involved in a live performance and recognizes the importance of having a production team with musical backgrounds. "It's easier to teach people television than music," he says.

Today's rehearsal provides the production team with the opportunity to ensure that the next evening's live broadcast will be artistically and technically seamless. The team already has access to Browning's shooting script, a multi-page document containing the entire sequence of shots – perhaps as many as 1,000 for a 90-minute broadcast. "It's a formula that I started that's used almost worldwide," says Browning. "In the old days, the BBC director conducted right out of the score. I could do that, but then I'd never look at my pictures; I'd never know what was going on."

Browning prepares the script after listening to a recording of each piece of

Louis Langrée conducting the Mostly Mozart Orchestra.

music with a score at hand. "I go through the music and think what camera can shoot what at what time and what sort of framing I want," Browning explains. "Do I want to be on the conductor when the oboe starts if he has a repeated phrase then go to the oboe, or do I want to go to the oboe first, then when it's repeated, go to the conductor and see him? You make choices. I prescript the entire show, I don't ad lib. I don't invent or extemporize at all."

And yet the script is a working document, subject to change prior to the concert. Where another production team might settle for keeping the camera on Fleming while she is singing, Browning seeks something less static. From his seat in the sound truck, he calls out, "Is there one picture that will show me the cello and Renée?" "No. 4," assistant director Skag replies. Browning responds, "I'll probably start on the cello so we're not just sitting there on her." With this approach, her vocal entrances become more impressive and the cutaways to other performers provide the audience a context for the work's dynamic. Moments later, during the rehearsal of Handel's aria, "Let the Bright Seraphim," the camera is focusing

Richard Termine

on Fleming when the trumpet voluntary begins. But where's the trumpeter? Goberman quickly calls out, "Look at camera number 2." By alternating close-ups of the soprano and trumpet, the broadcast team captures the lively musical dialogue between them. As the aria progresses, the camerawork becomes ever more fluid. Sometimes the team will scrap a plan in favor of visual simplification. When Hough is rehearsing the Andante from Mozart's 23rd Piano Concerto, Browning calls out, "Forget all these dissolves, just give me one shot on No. 5." Heller responds, "Pan the face and wipe," as the camera moves from pianist to conductor. A moment earlier, there is a sense of celebration in the sound truck when the camera moves in tight on Hough's hands and catches their reflection in the piano while a cellist is visible in the background. "That's gorgeous," says Goberman. "It'll never happen again," Skag responds.

Throughout the rehearsal, the team will make roughly two dozen such changes, prompting Browning to prepare a revised script for the actual live performance. The changes are consistent with the team's goal of capturing each work's emotional content by zeroing in on the interplay between musicians, the intensity of their expressions, and the demonstrable skill of their playing.

"You have to do something with a certain frisson -- something a little unexpected," says Browning. "I used to work much more in the abstract – close-ups of fingers, things like that. But there's a danger in not humanizing things. It lacks a certain empathy."

The *Live from Lincoln Center* style is more energetic – more cinematic – than the approach taken by many other producers of symphonic music. What we often see during a broadcast of, say, the Berlin Philharmonic, is more static – lingering shots of the conductor,

Kirk Browning: A First Lady's Discovery

Maybe First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt spotted something special in the 17-year-old boy at the piano. Or maybe she just wanted to hear a favorite song. Either way, it was a command performance, for she was the only customer in the Connecticut inn on that day and Kirk Browning was honored to comply with her request that he play "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." He did so well that she favored him with a $20 tip. "Can you imagine," he says with an infectious laugh, "that was the biggest tip I ever got."

That late 1930s summer job was a mere interlude for Browning, a promising music student in his childhood who later dreamt of composing music for the motion pictures. Later still, he wrote the music for ballads in collaboration with his friend and roommate Patrick Tanner (better known as Patrick Dennis, author of "Auntie Mame" and other comic classics).

With his musical career in limbo, Browning married Barbara Gum and began raising chickens and sheep on their Connecticut farm. It was a long way from Broadway – or from the nascent medium of television. But fortune smiled on him when he developed a friendship with Samuel Chotzinoff, a customer on his egg route who happened to be the head of NBC's Music Division. "Chotzi even sent one of our ballads to Frank Sinatra on the chance that he'd record it," Browning recalls. "Sinatra said it was an average ballad but the lyrics were very good. Chotzi cheered me up by saying, 'Don't worry, Schubert had to start somewhere too.'"

Chotzinoff then gave Browning his critical lead by recommending that he break into television. Browning said, "I don't know anything about television." Chotzinoff rebutted, "That's ok. Nobody knows anything about television.

pulling back finally to an overview of the entire orchestra. "I'm rather bored by the technique some directors use in Europe, which is very tasteful, but I don't get a sense that the director is getting an emotional response," says Browning. "He's just taking pictures."

In his famous broadcasts from the 1950s and 1960s, Leonard Bernstein insisted on a more static approach, keeping the camera on an instrumentalist or conductor. "That kind of didactic approach was what Lenny thought would be useful with certain audiences," Browning says. "There's nothing wrong with it. But I don't think we'd have as interested an audience if we did that."

Broadcast technology has improved a thousand fold since the heyday of Leonard Bernstein's children's concerts...

Fortunately, broadcast technology has improved a thousandfold since the heyday of Bernstein's children's concerts and *Joy of Music* series. "To do what we're accomplishing now, you need big lenses, like those used in broadcasting sporting events," Goberman explains. "Once they came in during the 1970s, it gave us a wider variety of shots."

Talking about a recent *Live from Lincoln Center* broadcast, Browning says, "When you look at some of the close-ups I took of Gil's face (referring to solo violinist Gil Shaham), you couldn't imagine that we were shooting from a camera in the last box in the house, perhaps 80 feet away. It looks like the camera is a foot away from him."

The team also has access to small robotic cameras that sit on small stands on the orchestra floor. Operated by cameramen working offstage, these robotic cameras can swivel around

It's just beginning."

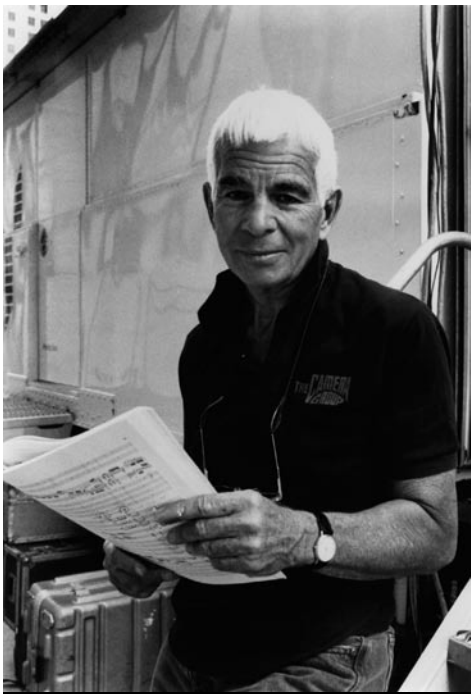
Recognizing Browning's musical aptitude, Chatzinoff helped him get a job with NBC in 1948. Shortly thereafter, he was working as a stage manager on NBC Opera's production of Gian-Carlo Menotti's "The Old Lady and the Thief." Browning recalls, "I was so moved by the music that I went out into the hall and burst into tears. Someone came up to me and asked why I was crying. I explained, then realized that the person I was talking to was Gian-Carlo himself."

By 1952, Browning directed his first opera for NBC, Jacques Offenbach's "RSVP." Less than two months later, on Christmas Eve, he directed the world premiere of Menotti's "Amahl and the Night Visitors," the first opera ever commissioned for television and a work destined for repeated showings during holiday seasons to come.

It was the beginning of a distinguished directing career that has spanned 53 years and hundreds of productions of operas, concerts, plays, ballets and other cultural events. In addition to his 13 years as director of NBC Opera, he was director of NET Opera from 1969 to 1972 and of *Live from Lincoln Center* since 1976. He has received nine national Emmy Awards, a George Foster Peabody Award, and the recognition of his peers as a pioneering and innovative director.

He is also a man who is grateful for his good fortune. Several years ago, he spotted a young man playing the piano in a California cocktail lounge. "I went up to him and said, 'I used to do what you're doing. I once got a tip from Eleanor Roosevelt for playing 'Smoke Gets in Your Eyes.' A little while later, I heard him playing that same song. I went over and gave him $40." Browning laughs nostalgically, then hums the song. The First Lady would have approved.

— G.V.



Kirk Browning

and provide a close-up of an individual musician. "They're basically invisible – they look like half a music stand," Browning says. "Having all these cameras gives me more options."

When Goberman originally proposed the live series in 1975, Browning had reservations about whether the medium was technologically sophisticated enough. Until then, the bulk of cultural performances had been shot in studios with special lighting and other quality controls. "When John said that we were gong to shoot a performance on an opera stage without any control of it, my automatic response was, 'Based on my experience, we'll be settling for something second-rate.'" Browning laughs at the recollection, adding: "John was bright enough not to listen to me and to know that you didn't go on the air without knowing what the problems might be."

Goberman obtained funding for in-house experiments, involving shooting live performances of a ballet, a play, two operas and a New York Philharmonic concert. The experiments varied in quality, depending on complexities of staging and lighting. "The Philharmonic worked best because it was the one where the camera could make the most sense of the material," says Browning. Based on these tests, Goberman recommended going forward. Then fate intervened: the distinguished tenor Richard Tucker died just after appearing in a production of "Pagliacci" that the team had taped. The executives at Lincoln Center decided that the television public must see Tucker's last performance, broadcasting warts and all.

"Fortunately the technology caught up with the programming impulse and the pictures became better and better and we needed to do less lighting," Browning recalls.

Live from Lincoln Center debuted on January 30, 1976 with a concert of the New York Philharmonic with conductor Andre Previn and piano soloist Van Cliburn. The series followed with Douglas Moore's opera "Ballad of Baby Doe," the New York City Ballet production of "Swan Lake," a Metropolitan Opera production of Rossini's "The Barber of Seville," and a second New York Philharmonic broadcast, this time featuring Claudio Arrau performing Beethoven's 3rd Piano Concerto.

Now, almost 30 years later, the production team huddles together in a room inside Avery Fisher Hall to review its coverage of the Mostly Mozart rehearsal. "It's always a collaborative

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts

effort," Goberman says. "Our crew has been together a long time and we're all pointed toward the same goal."

By the next night, with Browning's revised shooting script in hand and the eight cameramen ready to take the thousand or more cues that go into making the broadcast work crisply and energetically, Skag's voice calls out, "Cue Beverly, cue Beverly." The camera focuses on Beverly Sills, who does her brief introduction before the team cuts to the main stage at Avery Fisher Hall and the entrance of Louis Langrée. Browning's words, "Fast, fast, fast" echo as the camera moves from Langrée to the violins, pans to the oboes, cuts to a tight shot of the bassoon, then continues to move as an attentive viewer's eye might, capturing the flow of the music from instrument to instrument. Near the end of the first movement of the Haffner Symphony, the camera lingers on Langree smiling at the orchestra's lively rendering of the music.

Throughout the concert, there will be many such captured moments. One occurs during Handel's aria, "Endless Pleasure," when the camera juxtaposes Fleming's luminous presence to an intense cellist and a stolid-looking musician playing a 15th-century form of lute called a theorbo.

During her next aria, Handel's "Oh Sleep, Why Dost Thou Leave Me," Fleming's eyes close briefly as she sings the music's poignant refrain. The camera next cuts from Fleming to the paired theorbo and cello, before fading to Fleming smiling, before returning to the two instrumentalists, as the piece ends.

The pièce de résistance is the pairing of soprano and trumpet in Handel's "Let the Bright Seraphim," as Fleming is by turns spirited and regal in her interpretation of the aria. Trumpeter Neil Baum responds impressively, as the camera shots alternate between him and the soprano.

The camera movement varies yet again when Hough performs the Andante from Mozart's 23rd Piano Concerto. Shots of his fingers moving deftly over the keyboard are followed by close-ups of his face, then the camera pulls wide to a two-shot of pianist and conductor before dissolving to the entire orchestra.

Finally, the program returns to the third and fourth movements of the Haffner Symphony. In the final "Presto" movement, the camerawork quickens even more, capturing a quick succession of faces – oboes, bassoons, violins, cellos – before returning to Langrée conducting with energy and command. Seated at home or in the hall, we too are energized, eyes intent on the musicians, ears filled with the music's grace and vitality.

Greg Vitiello is a New York-based writer and editor whose books include *Eisenstaedt: Germany, Spoleto Viva, Twenty Seasons of Masterpiece Theatre* and *Joyce Images*. From 1966 to 1972 he wrote for National Educatonal Television and Children's Television Workshop.

Big Audience Changes Ahead

How digital and broadband Web TV will affect viewing behavior. **By John Carey**

Those who are old enough to recall when television first entered their home can recount strange tales of people who were so mesmerized by this new technology that they watched test patterns broadcast before or after the regular programming day. When programs were on-the-air, not only did the family watch TV as a group but on any given evening, friends and seemingly half the neighborhood might drop by to watch the magic box. Others, whose families could not afford a TV (they cost six weeks salary for an average household in the late 1940s) and who had already worn out their welcome at the homes of neighbors with TV, may recall hanging out in department stores or neighborhood taverns to catch a glimpse of television. These were common viewing patterns in the early days of television.

TV viewing stabilized for a while, as family groups watched entire programs together from the small number of choices that were available on a single, living room TV with over-the-air reception. However, changes in technology led to changes in viewing behavior. The first important new technology for television was the remote control. It led to more channel changing and became an instrument of power in the household. Whoever controlled the remote, controlled the TV and that was likely to be dad. When color TV began to penetrate homes in the late 1950s and into the 1960s, it reinvigorated television and people watched more programs. Cable TV, which had been a simple service in rural areas that picked up a few distant broadcast stations and retransmitted them into homes, entered major cities in the 1970s and began to develop many new channels. At the same time, households were getting a second and sometimes a third TV set. The combination of more channels, extra TVs and remotes led many households to split up their TV viewing and watch more niche programming. Some people, mostly males, spent much of their TV viewing "channel surfing," watching a few seconds or minutes of many different programs. The VCR entered millions of homes by the mid 1980s and changed viewing patterns by allowing people to "time shift" or record and watch programs after they were broadcast. It also competed with traditional television programs by letting people buy or rent videocassette movies and watch them whenever they

wished.

How are people using all the new media in today's environment, such as high-definition television, digital video recorders, video-on-demand and Web video? My work, over the past 30 years, has been to observe how people actually use television in their lives by going into homes, interviewing people in depth about their TV usage and watching them watch TV. More recently, my work has taken me into the homes of people with new television media. The picture that emerges is fascinating and suggests that much change is underway.

The Changing Media Scene

With apologies to the hard-core technologists among us, let's divide the current scene of new television media into two groups - digital television and broadband Web television. Digital television includes high definition television (HDTV), video-on-demand (VOD), and digital video recorders (DVRs). Broadband Web television includes videos that are streamed (transmitted and watched now) or downloaded (sent over time, stored and watched later) over high speed Internet connections.

Over the past five to 10 years, there has been more change than in the previous 50.

One of the most important characteristics of the current media environment is not technological but social. It is the expectation that media and content should be available on demand just about anywhere. As media scholar John Pavlik observes, people—especially the younger generation—have pervasive access to a broad range of media and have developed expectations that they should be able to get what they want, when they want it and where they want it. This is true for television as well as cellphones, email and information from the Web. People also experience television in a wider range of sizes (from 60-inch HDTV sets to two-inch cellphones) and on a wider range of display devices, many of which are not TV sets (e.g., laptop computers and portable media players). So, for them, television is no longer a single medium. It includes many different media with a common element of video, just as books, magazines and newspapers are different media with a common element of print.

Television is also increasingly digital, recorded and transmitted in the 0s and 1s of computer code, which supports the many new features that have been introduced. According to the FCC, less than 15 percent of households get television from traditional over-the-air analog broadcasts. Satellite TV is entirely digital, cable TV has converted more than one third of subscribers to digital service, and broadband Web video is entirely digital. When asked, most consumers don't understand what digital television is except that it has "better pictures" and allows many new services. What they do experience is rapid change and some confusion over the range of options. The public's experience of television was relatively stable for 50 years, with only a handful of devices such as remote controls and VCRs, leading to changes in viewer behavior. Over the past five to 10 years, there has been more change than in the previous 50.

Changing Viewer Behavior

Then: A family watching TV in the late 1950s.

The new television technologies have led to several common changes in viewing behavior and consumers' experience of television. Overall, they have increased the enjoyment of television for those who have the new technologies, provided more control, reduced dependence on schedules, and increased the time people spend with video programming. Increased time with video programming does not necessarily mean more time with traditional broadcast or cable TV programs, since many people now spread their television viewing across more delivery systems such as DVDs, the Web and on-demand content. Some of the new technologies, e.g., HDTV and DVRs have increased group viewing. However, this may be an artifact of having only one HDTV set or one DVR that everyone wants to share. As households get a second or third unit, they may return to more personalized consumption of television.

For a long time, HDTVs were slow to penetrate U.S. households due to disputes over standards, high early costs and poor marketing. However, 2004 was a breakthrough year for HDTV, as more than 20 percent of TVs purchased were capable of displaying HDTV. The Consumer Electronics Association forecasts that more than half of all TVs purchased in 2005 will be capable of displaying HDTV. Households that have HDTVs report that it restores the luster of television and makes it a central focus of whatever room it is in. This relates to the sharper images but also to the size of the sets. Most people buy larger HDTVs compared to previous TVs that they owned. Observing them watch HDTV, they appear to do less multi-tasking (doing something else while watching TV) than when watching regular TV since it grabs their attention so strongly. In turning on their HDTVs, most viewers go first to channels that carry HDTV (they are generally grouped together) and see if there is something they like. Only if they can't find a good program in HDTV do they then go to regular channels.

Viewers of HDTV report that shows with high production standards look much better in high definition and shows that are produced with low budgets generally look worse in high definition than on regular TV. They also comment that certain types of visuals work very well in HDTV and are more likely to attract them. Generally, these are visuals with bright colors and moving action. For this reason, sports is a big draw for many HDTV households.

Now: One viewer with a laptop computer.

Most HDTV sets have very good sound capability and some households add high-end home-theater systems to their HDTVs. However, they indicate that the sound in HDTV productions varies from spectacular to poor and, as in the case of low-production visuals, low-quality audio sounds worse on an HDTV system. Curiously, very few commercials have been transmitted in HDTV to date, but this is expected to change in 2006.

There are two types of digital video recorders (DVRs) discussed here: stand-alone boxes such as Tivo and DVR technology that is built into a cable or satellite box. Both allow viewers to easily record programming from any part of the TV schedule and watch at their convenience. They also allow people to create their own instant replays, for example to playback the last several seconds of action during a football game, and to start watching 'live' programming after the show has started. Many DVR owners call the latter "building a buffer" and use the time delay to fast-forward past boring scenes in programs or commercials. DVRs have had a big impact on TV-viewing behavior of many households that have the technology. A large number of people with DVRs move away from real-time viewing of scheduled programs and either watch programs that have been stored on the hard drive or turn on the DVR and start watching programs 10 to 15 minutes later so that they can skip ahead if they wish.

DVR users report that television is a more enjoyable experience because they watch more of the programs they like rather than settle for what is on at any given time. The group that seems to benefit most from DVRs are those who have limited time to watch TV and whose schedules are inflexible. They report that the full 24-hour schedule is now available to them even though they may be able to watch TV for only one hour a night. This also appears to have a modest benefit for programs that are not in prime time and therefore not available to the largest audience. However, published reports on DVR usage indicate that most people record the same popular shows that everyone watches.

People with DVRs watch fewer commercials .

There are many early indicators of side effects associated with DVR usage. One is that DVR owners channel surf less, since they have already found what they want from the full week's schedule that is now available to them. The impact of DVRs on commercials has

John Carey

been discussed at great length — people with DVRs watch fewer commercials. However, there are several important nuances to this behavior. Many people report that they have stopped watching commercials completely, but follow-up discussion with these people indicates that they still watch *some* commercials, e.g., promotions for TV programming and movies, funny favorite commercials and commercials with visuals that catch their eye as they fast forward through the commercial. Indeed, it was reported that during the 2005 Super Bowl, the most common use of the instant replay on DVRs was to watch commercials a second time.

Video on Demand (VOD) allows a TV viewer to access specific content at any time. The selected program or movie is transmitted to one TV set, where a person has the same controls as with a videocassette—stop, rewind, fast forward. Some VOD programming has a usage charge, generally for a 24-hour rental; some is included in a monthly subscription package of programs; and some is free, with or without ads. VOD is a major offering within digital cable services and is believed by many to provide a competitive advantage for cable over satellite. However, it has grown slowly.

Consumers like the concept of VOD but many have found the reality of the service disappointing. VOD has not been able to offer the latest movies, since major studios release recent movies to video rental shops first. Television program VOD has been slowed by contract negotiations with program providers. Subscription VOD such as HBO-On Demand allows viewers to watch any movie offered by HBO in a given month, anytime they wish. It has been received positively. Observations of VOD viewing behavior reveal some of the challenges. One is the menus for VOD content. Some people say it is difficult to find programs when they have to navigate through a few layers of menus. Others avoid menus completely and may not see what is available on VOD. Responding to this, many cable systems have put an "entrance" to VOD services on regular channels that people pass as they channel surf.

In order to understand how people are using video on the Web, it is important to know how faster access to the Web through broadband cable or telephone lines has changed Web usage. With broadband, many people are using the Web in ways similar to their use of television. This makes it easier for them to begin to make the transition to watching video on the Web. Typically, PCs with broadband connections are on whenever anyone is in the house, as is common with TV sets, and people use them for much longer periods compared to dial-up PCs. In some cases, people sit in easy chairs at these PCs instead of office chairs, perhaps because they spend so much time with the PC. Also, many decorate the area on top of or next to the monitor with stuffed animals or family photos, much as they decorated TVs in the past. Another change is that some people, especially children, use the Web as a group. For example, two or three children will sit together at the PC while using an entertainment site. In addition, wireless networks have made it easier to locate computers in any room of the household, not just a "home office" as in the past. So, PCs are now in some rooms that were previously the domain of TVs, such as living rooms

and bedrooms. Often, the TV and PC are used together. Further, broadband supports a range of entertainment, not just information or email. As the PC is used more for entertainment, it is easier to make the leap to video entertainment over the Web.

The amount of video watched over the Web increased dramatically between 2003 and 2005. Much of the Web TV programming is short such as a news clip or a sports highlight. The sources of content range from traditional television groups such as NBC or ESPN to underground video producers to individuals who create amateur programs called video blogs. For people watching Web video, the experience is mixed. Sometimes it is good quality but in postage stamp size windows. Other video content becomes blurry if it is blown up to full screen. However, increasingly, it is reasonable quality and users report that it is acceptable if not as good as regular television.

For TV content providers, the web is emerging as another distribution opportunity.

Video file sharing of TV programs (recording shows on the computer and then sending the file to friends) and even movies is widespread, especially among young people, in spite of efforts to stop it. Media researcher Gali Einav did a study of file sharing habits and attitudes among college students. She found that file sharing is very common and students do it for reasons of convenience, control and immediacy. Very few were concerned about the legality of sharing copyrighted material. They viewed it as a form of sampling content to determine if they wanted to buy it.

Implications for the Future

Changes in television technologies and viewer behavior have a number of implications for consumers, content producers and media organizations. One important consequence of the new television environment is complexity. We have taken for granted that a television set is easy to operate: turn it on, change channels, set the volume and sit back to watch. In the new digital television environment, TVs are computers with multiple modes, inputs, outputs and complex remote controls to operate a large number of functions. Some viewers, especially older people with little or no computer experience, have trouble operating these TVs and finding programs that may be a few steps down in a series of menus.

Are TV schedules going to go away, except for live events? It could happen, but the timing is unclear. DVRs, VOD and Web TV effectively take away the TV schedule and make programs available at any time. If these technologies are widely accepted in the marketplace, TV schedules could become a part of history. Someday, NBC or A&E might say, "We have 87 programs available this month, watch them when you want, on any display device you want."

Given the very positive reaction to DVRs by those who have purchased them and the dramatic changes in viewing behavior by some of those households, the question has arisen whether DVRs will destroy the business model of commercial television, namely that advertisers pay for TV programs

because people watch the ads placed in the shows? The answer hinges on whether the mainstream users of DVRs that are built into cable and satellite boxes (projected to make up more than 90 percent of all DVR households by 2010) will change their viewing habits as much as the early adopters of stand-alone Tivo boxes. It appears that the mainstream DVR owner is not as extreme in using the technology as the early adopters. A study by Horowitz and Associates for ABC/ESPN, in which they gave DVRs to a large group of households, found that many people didn't use them very much or found only modest value in the core features. My interviews with second generation DVR households also suggest that many are not changing their viewing behavior as dramatically as the early adopters. The verdict is still out on the long-term impact of DVRs but they do not appear to represent the end of television as we know it. However, even a moderate loss of 'eyeballs watching commercials' could have an impact on business practices. Advertisers have been slow to experiment with exactly how people fast forward through commercials and why they watch some but not other commercials. Experimentation may lead to a new style of commercial for the DVR environment.

If advertisers have been slow to adapt to the DVR environment, program producers have been just as slow to adapt to the HDTV environment. A great deal of content is recorded and transmitted in HDTV but the style of the programs has generally followed the style of traditional programming. HDTV viewers report that wide shots in sports programming work much better in HDTV because you can see details that are lost in traditional TV. In addition, blemishes, wrinkles and even sweat are visible in HDTV, making some actors and reporters look better or worse. In the long term, when HDTVs are in a majority of homes, producers will have learned how to create programs that take advantage of the special features of HDTV. What is unclear is whether a new generation of actors, reporters and politicians will advance to new heights of popularity because they come across well in HDTV, as happened when radio and television were introduced.

Web TV is the new kid on the block. A few years ago, it was dismissed by many media analysts who believed that Web technology could not handle video adequately and that people would not watch TV programs on computer monitors, much less on cellphones or small-screen portable media players. However, some forms of Web TV have been widely accepted by households with broadband Web access and the technology will improve over the next few years. Equally important, many viewers have come to accept the computer monitor as a "second TV set,"much like kitchen TVs.

For TV content providers such as the major networks, the Web was perceived for a long time as a competitor for people's time, and it is. However, they now seem to have come around to believe that it is an opportunity to distribute programming. Just as they feared cable and satellite but ultimately came to embrace them as new ways to distribute programs, so the Web is emerging as yet another distribution opportunity.

The beginning of the 20th century was an extraordinary time of changes in the media landscape as motion

pictures, the phonograph and the telephone were emerging in society and radio was under development. The beginning of the 21st century is no less exciting as the many components of digital television and broadband Web TV are rapidly entering the everyday lives of consumers. These new television technologies provide greater convenience, control and customization for viewers as well as more ways to display TV in a wider variety of settings. New media are changing TV viewing behavior, but we have just begun to see the changes in content that will follow and adjustments in the business models in those who create and distribute television programming.

John Carey is Professor of Communications and Media Management at Fordham Business School. His research focuses on consumer adoption of new media and the impact of technology on media behavior.

Boring!

How reality programs prospered, proliferated and are now turning off many viewers.

By David Marc and Robert J. Thompson

In 1948, most Americans were still listening to radio during prime time. The networks were still broadcasting their full slates of dramas, situation comedies, variety shows, news, documentaries, dance music, and other popular genres. But the FCC had already issued 108 television licenses and, as David Sarnoff, William Paley and a few hundred executives knew, the handwriting was already on the screen for many of the special aural arts that had been evolving on radio since the 1920s. The three major radio networks were each feeding several hours of daily television service to tiny strings of stations concentrated in the urban corridors of the Northeast, the Great Lakes and California. Appliance stores were stocking sets and roof antennas were popping up on the national skyline for a 30-year moment in the sun. It was a time for 300-ohm wire, vertical hold controls, and replacement tubes.

That summer, for the first time, the nominating conventions of the Democratic and Republican parties were carried on television as well as radio. Though short on content, the baby television networks chose not to cover the nominating conventions of any of the other political parties, despite the fact that two minor-party candidates, arguably representative of two significant segments of the electorate, were also in the race: former vice-president Henry Wallace of Iowa, running on the American Labor Party ticket; and Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina of the States Rights Party (known familiarly as the Dixiecrats), a splinter formed by Southern Democrats who had walked out of the Democratic Party's 1948 convention after it adopted a platform plank expressly opposing legal segregation.

Truman won the election, but the Republicans took control of both houses of Congress for the first time since 1932. Neither party was able to deliver its campaign promises; some 60 years later, universal health care, the last piece of the New Deal safety net (proposed in the Democrats' platform) and the government-mandated retirement system remain issues at the center of the American political agenda. As for the minor parties, their defeat and dissolution also tell tales. The political power and membership of American labor unions have since dwindled to fractions of what they had been during the first half of the twentieth century, and labor strikes are as common as critters left off the endangered species

list. As for racial segregation, the century-long Jim Crow regime that followed the banning of slavery has completely lost the force of law. Class-oriented and race-oriented movements have continued to assert influence over voting patterns since 1948, but both have been placed, quite literally, "outside the box" of mainstream politics.

Most Americans, by all accounts, have spent a good deal of their time since 1948 watching television. Barely half the population votes, and one can only imagine how many of them exercise the franchise with the enthusiasm of agnostics sitting in church. Titanic historical events and political organizations continue to move people, but in most cases, that movement occurs to the right or to the left of their couches as they watch things "happen" on TV. If journalism is, as the saying goes, "the first draft of history," then we can be sure it is read more widely than the book.

Unbearable pressures—including racism, environmental degradation, and the perceived disintegration of a workable social order—have moved some people to high levels of personal commitment and to actions appropriate to their social beliefs. For others, however, the delights of the video screen—whether delivered by broadcast, cable, direct satellite transmission, call-up, or broadband—have sufficed to max out the capacity for supra-televisual empathies. The video screen, whether embellished by the comforts of 24/7 climate control and spine-dulling furniture or enhanced by stimulation of illicit, over-the-counter or prescription pharmaceuticals, is compelling enough to satisfy a wide swath of the population.

Political scientists and sociologists who speak of "voter apathy" and who bemoan a lack of citizenship or moral backbone in the population/audience may well have missed a salient point as concerns the survivors of the age of broadcasting. Merely bearing daily witness—even bite-size, CNN-Headline-size, daily witness—to the unending catalog of horrors announced in The News and re-enacted in The Entertainment may be more participation than *homo erectus* was built to withstand. To rise from the couch and actually go somewhere to vote for anybody might threaten some viewers with an assumption of guilt so frightening as to distance them from the grand ideals of the framers of the U.S. Constitution, if they have been so lucky as to have been schooled in those ideals.

But that was the broadcasting era, when people had their programs forcibly interrupted by "urgent messages" and even by planned presidential press conferences. Cable TV and the internet offer more news than ever, but they have removed the coercive burden of newswatching, thus enabling millions of viewers to abandon all contact with the collective mythologies of history, including the daily communion with history that we have come to call "the News." If people would rather be charmed by art than horrified by the world, who can blame them? Perhaps it is the news junkies who are dysfunctional.

The internet has not disrupted the sheer craving for television viewing; in fact, surfing with a well-designed browser on a broadband connection is quite arguably the most addictive form of TV watching yet to reach the market. Asked in 2002 if the internet was having a negative impact on television viewing, Betsy Frank, head of research for the Viacom Corporation's

MTV networks division replied, "What MTV viewers do less of, now that they are spending more time on the internet, is sleeping, talking and personal hygiene." A Gallup poll conducted that same year found television to be "the single most popular way to spend an evening" among Americans, three times more popular than "seeing friends." Why see friends when you can see *Friends* (NBC, 1994--2004)?

The relationship of radio and television broadcasting to American mass communication now bears comparison to the relationship between railroad travel and American mass transportation since the 1950s.

The relationship of radio and television broadcasting to American mass communication in the current century bears comparison to the relationship between railroad travel and American mass transportation since the 1950s. With the construction of the Interstate Highway System and the organization of air travel into a transcontinental mass transit system, the intercity passenger train gradually found itself pushed to the margins of an industry it had once dominated. No longer the imperious engine or symbol of American economy and culture, the passenger train was relegated to serving niche markets, such as megalopolitan center-city commuting and quality-time vacationing for those who continued to see value in viewing the nation's landscape, and doing so in the relative comfort of a vehicle that does not demand physical constraint or legally enforced sobriety. By the 1960s, it became apparent that government subsidies would play a necessary role if trains were to survive at all in the national transportation mix.

This marginality was not the technologically determined "fate" of all intercity railroad passenger travel in the same way that the horse-drawn stagecoach had been made obsolete by the passenger train. It was, rather, the result of consciously made political decisions in the United States that had the effect of withholding the necessary capital investment to keep American rail technology competitive with other forms of transport. Any doubt of this is dismissed with breathtaking speed by a 200-mile-per-hour train ride between Paris and Lyons or Tokyo and Osaka. An important factor in the disinvestment of the passenger train was that most American railroads were as anxious to leave the passenger business as the highway and aviation lobbies were to see them get out of it. The railroads preferred to concentrate their efforts on carrying uncomplaining potatoes and lumps of coal.

The American broadcasting station may be at the same kind of crossroads between viability and marginality that confronted the passenger train in the 1950s. Like the railroad station, the radio station debuted as a spectacular, transformative application of advanced technology and it was developed by private capital with the help of an extraordinary degree of government nurturing and protection. Each took less than a century to mature from a futurist "blue-sky" symbol into a workhorse industry at the heart of the national

economy. In the case of the passenger train, it was technologically elbowed out by the automobile and the airplane into a kind of inglorious semi-retirement, where it sits today, forced to beg for a meager government pension so it can maintain a minimal surviving service, without which it faces oblivion. Are old-fashioned broadcasting stations, the kind that have studios and transmitting towers and a local news operation in Your Town, or in a town nearby, or in a town of some kind, heading for the same fate?

Just as the American transportation industry committed itself to the belief that people can now be delivered more profitably by means other than rail, the American communication industry seems to be coming to the conclusion that advertising (and what it takes to get people to attend to advertising) is more profitably delivered by single-source satellite transmissions than by hundreds of locally transmitted airborne signals.

It is not surprising that news and business news programs are the only daily PBS shows aimed at adult audiences. The flagship is *The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer.* It began in 1969 as the *MacNeil-Lehrer Report,* and is a curious legacy from an era in broadcasting history when the network evening news, as presented by the likes of Cronkite, Chancellor and Howard K. Smith, were considered too brief in the attention span for the many people still thought to read newspapers. In the intervening decades, network news (Rather, Brokaw and Jennings) got much dumber than anyone could have imagined 40 years ago. The importance of the subsidized news on TV can be measured accordingly. Same said for PBS's *Nightly Business Report*, as compared to the market prognosticators who emerged on cable-TV financial advice programs during the dot.com boom (and some of whom are under indictment).

Daniel Schorr, whose investigative work on the Watergate scandals got him fired from CBS in the 1970s, joined NPR soon after he was let go. Three decades later, well past the age when most commercial broadcasting journalists are kicked out of the building, he is one of a very few senior reporters who delivers news analysis on the radio. The commercial competition consists of Paul Harvey.

It would be easy to ennoble the Age of Broadcasting as a golden time when tens of millions of Americans, hungering for knowledge of current events, pressed their ears to the radio and, later, their noses to the TV set. The truth, as is often case, is something less grand. Hindsight seems to indicate that the chief reason for the large pre-cable news audience was that most of the time when news was being broadcast, there was nothing else on. This was due to two factors which are rapidly fading into broadcasting history: (1) channels were scarce because of the limitations of the over-the-air spectrum; and (2) FCC licensing standards, then still in practice, were easily met by all the competitors in a given broadcasting market by counterprogramming news shows against each other. Cable TV and video appliances ended the scarcity problem, and a pop revival of get-the-government-off-of-our-backs capitalism took care of the rest of it.

Offered an increasing number of alternatives, increasing chunks of audience soon demonstrated the same indifference toward broadcast news that they had shown toward newspapers since the advent of broadcasting. Commercial

radio news shriveled into headline scraps and traffic-jam sightings. At the same time, TV news was boutiquing into a taste culture item for "news junkies."

To a mind formed during the Age of Broadcasting, it might follow logically that less broadcast news would have been accompanied by more, and perhaps even better, prime-time dramatic programming on the broadcast networks. However, other conditions of the post-cable entertainment order prevented this from happening. With broadcast network audience share dwindling, but prime-time production costs not, broadcast networks found themselves looking for low-overhead programming ideas, especially formats that could avoid burden of star salaries. Two genres met this need and proliferated through turn-of-Century-21 television: news magazines, which grew in number and frequency; and reality TV shows, which grew in number and freakishness.

In the case of the former, the heritage networks (ABC, CBS, NBC) were attracted by the opportunity to use the fixed costs of their news divisions—including the salaries of correspondents, writers and other production personnel—to generate what amounted to bargain material for prime-time entertainment. The magazine idea itself was nothing new. Pat Weaver, the first head of NBC television, foresaw it in the early 1950s as a mold from which the entire television day might be cast. The original designs of such Weaver programming creations as the *Today Show* (early morning), *Home* (midday), and the *Tonight Show* were essentially magazines, with their emphases shifting to suit the rhythms of the day. After Weaver left NBC, however, the magazine synthesis all but disappeared from the two surviving series, with *Tonight* dropping its news component to become an entertainment vehicle (it had once contained a daily wrap-up from a news correspondent) and *Today* becoming a news division production (it had once featured the chimpanzee J. Fredd Muggs as a cast regular).

The model for the contemporary news magazine is CBS's *60 Minutes*, which premiered in 1968. CBS television, which had a tradition of presenting prime-time news division productions, including such honored series as *See It Now, The Twentieth Century*, and *CBS Reports,* had gradually pulled all weekly news and documentary programs from its prime-time schedule during the early 1960s, giving the slots to more profitable entertainment series.

Throughout the 1980s, NBC tried repeatedly to create a prime-time magazine to give the same kind of promotional boost to its news personalities as its two rivals were getting from *60 Minutes* and *20/20*. The network, however, showed little of the patience that its rivals had demonstrated. Quick cancellations created a collection of failures that soon became the stuff of stand-up comedy routines.

The network finally found a news magazine signature in 1992 with the premiere of *Dateline*. The show's success can be at least partially attributed to the publicity created during its first year when it was revealed that *Dateline* producers had staged, for the cameras, a phony test-crash explosion of a General Motors pick-up truck in an exposé of the vehicle's defective gas tank. As had been the case in the 1950s when quiz shows, including NBC's *Twenty-One*, had been rigged to insure viewer interest, there can be little doubt that an exploding truck was,

indeed, a superior entertainment product in comparison to a non-exploding truck. It can even be argued that, knowing the vehicle to be dangerous (based on the evidence of actual past explosions), the producers were merely putting art in the service of public safety. In any case, critics were outraged that viewers had not been informed by NBC of the difference between art and The News. There wasn't even one of those minuscule, unreadable disclaimers that they sometimes use on these kinds of programs when they're showing animated graphics of a story that would have otherwise had no footage.

The 1990s marked a period of unprecedented decay in broadcast journalism… Anything too ridiculous to be called journalism could be classified as a "reality" show rather than "news."

The dual consequences of the exploding *Dateline* truck scandal mark a cusp moment in the historical development of broadcast news: (1) in a homage to the best traditions of American journalism (from, let's say, Zenger to Cronkite), the head of NBC News was forced to resign by the network's high-minded top brass; and (2) *Dateline* had earned for itself a permanent spot on the NBC prime-time schedule from the network's high-ratings-minded top brass.

Accordingly, the 1990s marked a period of unprecedented decay in broadcast journalism. Whereas two decades earlier, facing the threat of jail, Frank Stanton had withheld video outtakes and names of sources used in a CBS documentary concerning corruption at the Pentagon, the CBS of the 1990s was cowed by the tobacco industry into suppressing a piece concerning what and when industry executives knew about the ill effects of smoking.

The free-fall of broadcast news standards in prime time was finally offered a plateau—a position from which it could define and defend itself—by the increasing popularity of reality TV. Anything too ridiculous to be called journalism could be classified as a "reality" show rather than "news," with production responsibility kicked cleanly to the lower expectations of the entertainment division. Entertainment producers, for their part, were happy with the arrangement, which freed them, simultaneously, from the two things they liked least: (1) the "credibility thing," which constrained news magazines from following their entertainment instincts; and (2) the salaries of star actors. In fact, reality shows presented opportunities to work without using any professional actors at all, as most performers in a reality vehicle ask nothing more for their services than a chance to appear on national television. As if that overhead saving is not godsend enough, you can even have some of your nastiest production costs—car crashes, burning buildings, ambulances racing through the streets—picked up by taxpayer-supported municipal agencies.

Though reality programming is usually referred to as a "genre" of television, it is developing in a way that indicates it may be something more than a mere program type. Reality TV is perhaps better understood as a media-age equal partner to those two long-running Aristotelian mega-genres, comedy and tragedy. At its best, Reality is full of comic elements,

especially humor and confusion, as well as the kind of challenges to moral sensibility that are associated with tragic drama. However, Reality shows depart from traditional dramatic art in that they do not depend on either catharsis (tragedy) or the restoration of harmony (comedy) for satisfactory conclusions. Instead, they tend to invoke existential reality as, of all things, a *deus ex machina* that rescues them from violating their scheduled time slot.

Unscripted filming using a hidden camera, the rawest form of Reality, offers us the employee urinating into the coffee pot in the back room of the workplace, as in *Busted on the Job*. At its most theatrical—scripted filming with a hidden camera—Reality offers us a person having a two-way conversation with a house plant, as in *Candid Camera*, a show created by reality TV pioneer Allen Funt, who began developing the form on radio during the 1940s with his *Candid Microphone* series.

The most successful reality series usually synthesize elements of cinéma vérité with familiar elements of dramatic genres.

The most successful reality series in prime time usually synthesize elements of cinéma vérité, which was conceived of for use in muckraking documentaries, with familiar elements of dramatic genres. In *Cops*, the longest-running of the original FOX shows, vérité meets the old-fashioned TV cop show, a la *Adam-12* or *Starsky and Hutch*. Combining elements of these dramas with documentary realism, a typical *Cops* episode is likely to yield, in the editing room, a catch from its own familiar pool of archetypal perps: shirtless drunken rednecks, defiant drunk drivers, African American teenage boys up to no good, and so on.

In MTV's *The Real World*, street crime is traded for puberty and related identity crises as the "reality" catalysts. Vérité conjugates with soap opera and, again, recognizable characters are key. Studboy, virgin, slutgirl, gay guy, bohemian, and others mix it up emotionally in an overstudied search for self. Public casting calls—no résumés required, no union cards allowed—draw thousands seeking nothing more than an unpaid internship in celebrity. How does a non-actor prepare? By watching Reality and trying on the personality costume that best fits. ABC's *Are You Hot?*, in which people strip down to show all but genitalia to be rated for their degree of physical perfection, uses most of a storyline previously restricted to pornographic videos. It may well mark the last leg of a psychosexual journey in American mass culture that began with the imposition of the Hays Code on Hollywood films in the 1930s.

The starkest reality presented by reality television at its best is a demystification of the medium of television. TV began penetrating American life when crowds first gathered in front of appliance stores to stand and behold the miracle of Milton Berle. Despite its placement in the home, television maintained the Olympian aura of the theater (via cinema), a place where only gods, goddesses, and the extreme cases of humanity could appear. Those days, of course, are gone. Children put tapes into VCRs and fast-forward them when bored, which is often soon, and eject them in favor of others when they lose interest completely. Parents begin taping

their children at the birth moment and keep video tabs of first steps, birthday parties, and everything else until the children's emerging sexual personalities force them to abandon camera. Once they have become too dangerous to appear in parent productions, the children make their own tapes. As in most human endeavors, those who see themselves as extraordinary in some way —in appearance, in performance, in charisma, or in the effective practice of good and/or evil—are ready to move on to the next level. Reality is waiting: *The Bachelor, Road Rules, Survivor, Who Wants to be a Millionaire?, MTV Spring Break Coverage, The Jerry Springer Show.*

The Summer of Reality began in May 2000, with the premiere of *Survivor.* The success of the CBS prime-time series marked the emergence of Reality as a fully fledged network programming phenomenon, worthy of cookie-cutter imitations, late-night spoofs, and public obsession. By its final episode, some 62 million viewers had seen one or more episodes and the "*Survivor* phenomenon" had saturated mass conversation like a number one hit from the 1960s. Broadcast network television had found what it needed: an inexpensive programming form that promised to put it, if only occasionally now, squarely at the center of conversation at the office water cooler, above, beyond, and beneath demographic lines. Imitations followed: *Big Brother, Temptation Island, Fear Factor,* and so on. Many people who watch television are already bored.

The future development of old-fashioned scripted TV drama has fallen to the premium cable services. *Sex in the City* (HBO) dropped the laugh track and reworked the sitcom into a vital, mature—and very funny—comedy of manners. Ironically, broadcast stations across the country are lining up for local syndication rights. Showtime's *Queer as Folk* and HBO's *Six Feet Under* have proved that prime-time soap operas can be written for post-pubescent viewers, and *Carnivale* (HBO) has created a hybrid species of the historical novel, science fiction and religious mysticism that goes begging for a critic willing to take a chance on explaining the plot. As one writer predicted in a 1984 article on the "cable revolution" for *The Atlantic Monthly,* "From now on, if you want good stuff, you're going to have to pay for it."

David Marc is a writer and editor who teaches at Syracuse University. Robert J. Thompson is a professor at Syracuse University, where he heads the Center for the Study of Popular Television at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communication. This article is adapted from their book, *Television in the Antenna Age: A Concise History* (Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

Fake News

One man's experience on *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart. **By John V. Pavlik**

In the spring of 2005 I became something of an accidental celebrity on campus. I was a guest on *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart. Since being on the show I have had students ask me for my autograph. I've seen attendance at my occasional public lectures swell significantly. Students have interviewed me for campus publications and television about what it's like to be on *The Daily Show.*

How did I, the chair of a department of journalism and media studies, come to be on this popular show specializing in "fake news"? What was it like being on a show which research has shown 21% of Americans 18-29 years of age say is a primary source of their news ? By way of comparison, only a slightly higher percentage, 23%, of this age group report the major television evening news programs serve as a primary source of their news.

How It All Started

As a department chair at Rutgers, the state university of New Jersey, I have seen significant funding cuts to our budget in recent years. These cuts have made our job increasingly difficult, sometimes forcing us to cut key programs, cancel classes and seek innovative alternative funding opportunities.

One unique opportunity developed in the fall of 2004 when the campus daily student newspaper agreed to sponsor the offering of our advanced reporting course, which we had been unable to offer the previous semester because of state funding cuts. In exchange for its support, the paper would be permitted to enroll a half-dozen of its reporting staff in the class, even though they were not majors in our department and might not have met all the prerequisites. Instead, the instructor of the course, a seasoned journalist with more than 20 years of daily newspaper reporting experience and a veteran journalism teacher in our department, would review each student's qualifications and decide on a case-by-case basis whether each should be admitted into the course.

I was pleased we were able to make this novel arrangement since otherwise we would not have been able to offer the class. Nevertheless, from the outset, I made clear to the editorial leadership of the student paper that this arrangement was an experimental one and might not be one we would want to repeat. I indicated that we would review the course at its conclusion and determine whether we would offer the course again with the sponsorship of the student newspaper (some $5,000 per semester). Moreover, there might

be significant changes in how we would structure and teach the course. An important part of my job is to not just to find ways to offer our curriculum in an increasingly financially challenging time but to make sure that curriculum is of the highest possible quality.

At the conclusion of the course, it was clear that the class was a success. Ten of the 18 stories done by students in the course were published in the student newspaper, most running on page one. Not one of the stories published was challenged for accuracy. One of the stories, a series on tuition hikes, won a third-place award in the investigative and enterprise reporting category in the New Jersey Press Association's Better College Newspaper contest.

Yet the course had its problems. Some students were not properly identifying themselves when conducting interviews. I knew this first-hand because one student interviewed me for a story she said she was writing for the student newspaper but never mentioned she was also doing it as part of a class assignment. Some students were also relying extensively on email to conduct their interviews. I knew this because a student in the class attempted to interview me this way. Although email has its place in modern newsgathering, it does not and should not replace face-to-face interviewing or even audio interviews conducted over the telephone. Email can be used when following up with a source, or when other attempts to conduct in-person or phone interviews fail and deadline is fast-approaching. Otherwise, nuance and other important aspects of an interview can be lost. On the other hand, email responses from sources can guarantee accurate quotes, and the value of this cannot be underestimated.

Overall, the biggest problem with the course, however, was that the students were settling in to a comfort zone that I wanted to break them out of. The advanced investigative course is our highest-level undergraduate reporting class. These students might not take another reporting course before graduating, and I wanted to make sure they were challenged to get beyond the comfort of the campus. In this course as in our many other reporting courses students do much of their reporting on campus, covering campus stories.

After the conclusion of the semester, I reviewed the course with the instructor and discussed changes that needed to be made to improve the course, including getting the students to fully identify themselves, not over-rely on email to do their interviews, and to get students off campus for their reporting. This last change I felt was the most important, because it would insure that our students would not graduate without ever having conducted at least one investigation off-campus. This would be vital to them in pursuing their professional careers as journalists. Beginning reporters need to know where city hall is. They need to know how government works. They need to know how to pursue a story beyond the ivy covered walls of the campus.

As exciting as this story might have been, it never would have captured the attention of *The Daily Show* without a bit of additional drama. The drama came in the form of a student who did two investigations in the course, the first of which was published in the student paper. It dealt with the use, or lack of use, of student course evaluations in various academic departments and by

faculty. She interviewed me for this story.

Her second investigation, a critical examination of the university's athletics program, was rejected by the student paper as being too opinionated. The paper's editors asked her to make certain changes, particularly adding balance by expanding the sources used, but she declined. The editors also offered to publish the article on the op/ed page, but she again declined.

Inside Higher Ed alleged that the university was censoring its students. This was completely unfounded.

Then my story started to pick up steam. An online education news source (*Inside Higher Ed*, http://www.insidehighered.com/) caught wind of the developments, and decided to run a story suggesting a link between the student paper's rejection of the athletics story and my separate and unrelated decision to focus future offerings of the course off campus. It was alleged that the university was censoring its students, banning them from reporting critically about the campus, particularly the athletics program. This was completely unfounded. The student paper is independently run, and I had no contact with the paper or its editors since the beginning of the semester. Further, the student paper has recently run other articles critical of the athletics program. My decision was completely my own, and was not the result of any pressure from the university, the athletics department or central administration. Focusing off campus was entirely intended to improve the course by getting the students to cover a wider range of stories than just the campus. After further discussion, I modified my decision so that students could cover the campus, as long as they also did at least one off-campus investigation. This is the approach we are continuing to use in the course.

After the story ran online, the state's press picked up the story's scent. Within days, reporters from a half-dozen of the state's newspapers called me for an interview. They wanted to know why we were censoring our students. I tried to explain that we were not, but most had already made up their minds and only wanted to get a good quote from me.

The Daily Show Gets Interested

Since our campus is located just a few miles from New York City, producers for *The Daily Show* caught wind of the swirling controversy, and decided this was rich fodder for a humor piece that would appeal to college-age students, a prime component of the show's audience. An assistant producer called my office and asked if I would be willing to be interviewed on the show. I have a policy of accepting all media interview requests, so I said yes. The assistant producer asked me if I could just tell him a bit about the situation, and so I did. I briefly summed up the background of the course and how it came to offered with the support of the student paper, how we had decided in advance to review the course at the end of the semester, and might make changes, how and why. I explained how many of the students in the course had stories published, and how the editors'

"Correspondent" Ed Helms

decisions were completely independent of me or the department, that there was no censorship and no connection between my decision to modify course and the paper's rejection of the athletics story. The assistant producer told me that this was exactly what they would like me to say on the show. I knew the program was a comedy show specializing in satirizing the day's news and thought he was no doubt being at least a bit a disingenuous in order to discourage me from getting cold feet and changing my mind about being on the show. I was curious to see how they would frame things for the greatest comedic/satiric effect. I figured he was simultaneously trying to get as much background on me as he could, how I was likely to talk about the situation. He would report back to his fellow *The Daily Show* producers so they could plan their attack.

The "correspondent," Ed Helms, is a stand-up comedian. He has no background in journalism.

Over the next two weeks producers and assistant producers from the show called me several times, conducting additional "pre-interviews." The lead producer on the show, Stu Miller, explained how he was in fact an experienced journalist. He had studied journalism as an undergraduate student at New York University, and had even been editor of NYU's student daily newspaper. Then, after graduation, he spent several years as an assistant producer for CBS News at the network level. He never said anything funny, and never said anything to imply he was planning a comedy bit, although obviously I knew he was. He went out of his way to impress me with his journalistic credentials, and used various techniques and terminology common to television news. He talked about the "pre-interview", "the "interview", and the "correspondent" who would interview me. After scheduling and rescheduling the interview a couple of times, we finally settled on a date in March when the "news" team, as he called them, could come to campus and conduct the interview. Coincidentally, the date was during our campus spring break, and I explained that there would not be many students around, but they

said that was ok and would not be a problem.

The day finally arrived and I waited in my office for *The Daily Show* news team to arrive at 4 p.m. as scheduled. They did in fact arrive at 4:30 p.m. and began to set up. It was seemed relatively small team for a national show, with one producer, the correspondent, Ed Helms, a camera operator and a sound/lighting operator. As the technicians began to set up, the producer, Stu Miller, and I chatted. He started with reminding me of his news credentials, and then asked me a few friendly soft-ball questions about the story to loosen me up and help me relax. Meanwhile, the "correspondent" avoided me. He paced outside my office in the hallway. Other than that, the situation reminded me very much of another time when I had been interviewed about Internet rumors many years ago by Lesley Stahl of CBS News' *60 Minutes*. But, it was peculiar that Helms seemed to be actively avoiding me. He seemed like an actor trying to get into his part. On *The Daily Show* web site (http://www.comedycentral.com/shows/the_daily_show/index.jhtml) Helms's official biography explains his background is in stand-up comedy. "For years Ed worked in the comedy trenches as a stand-up comedian, eventually earning regular spots at NYC's top comedy clubs and an appearance on the Fall 2002 season of Comedy Central's Premium Blend." He has no background in journalism.

After about 20 minutes, the set-up was complete and the interview began. I was seated in my office and Helms sat opposite from me with the single camera shooting over his shoulder at me. From this point on, it quickly became clear that this was a fake-news comedy show and not real news. Just before the first question, the producer handed me a release and asked me to please sign. He said without this signed release, they could not proceed. It was a standard release and I signed. Actual television news programs do not require guests or interviewees to sign a release, unless they are legal minors.

Then, also unlike a typical news interview, the correspondent clearly had no idea what he should ask me. Instead, Stu Miller handed him a list of questions, or rather, a numbered list of questions, from 1 to approximately 30. Miller had a copy and he sat just outside of the camera's field of view. Helms said, now what should I ask? Miller responded by stating a series of numbers, such as 7, 9, 14. Helms would then ask question 7, and I would answer. Then he would ask question 9, and I would respond. Then he would ask question 14 and I would speak. Then Helms would say, I don't know where to go from here, what should I ask? The producer, the "journalistic" brains of the operation, would then identify another three or so questions by number only…obviously in order to keep me from knowing what Helms was going to ask and to keep me in the dark as long as possible, hoping to get me to answer with as little preparation as possible, perhaps laughing, pausing or clearing my throat in a way that they could later edit to make me look silly, sinister or stupid.

After roughly three hours of the "interview" the crew then re-set up, pointing the camera at the correspondent. He was then going to re-ask the questions, this time for the camera and the microphone. Notably, the questions he asked this time did not

correspond precisely to the questions he had actually asked me. The wording was somewhat different (e.g., "do you expect me to believe that" versus "do you really expect me to believe that"). They were sometimes asked in different sequence (e.g., 7, 9, 14 versus 14, 9, 7). Sometimes, he would ask the question three or four times, each time somewhat differently, trying different inflection and tone. Miller would coach him, telling him to ask it this way or that way (e.g., one time accent "really" and another time accent "that"). It was clear to me that they were making sure that they would have the best possible phrasing to edit for greatest comedic effect back at the studio. In some cases, entirely new questions were asked. Some were cleverly orchestrated and prepared sight gags, some slapstick.

At one point, the producer pulled out his cell phone and made a phone call. A moment later Helms's cell phone rang and he answered it. It was the producer calling him. But Helms pretended it was someone else. As he extended his arm in my direction, apparently attempting to hand me his cell phone he said, "It's for you." But, quickly he said, "No, wait, it's your student…don't answer it." He pulled the phone back, stood up, ran to my office door, opened it, and tossed the phone out, all the while the camera operator trying to catch it on videotape. Later, Helms retrieved his phone, unharmed, and I was impressed by its durability.

The final three-minute piece featured about a minute of my interview, a couple minutes of the student whose athletics story had been rejected by the student paper, and another few seconds of correspondent Ed Helms throwing a stack of newspapers into a garbage can.

One particularly interesting segment featured Helms leading our student into the "athletics" department, explaining to her that he would show her how to do investigative journalism. He walked up to the receptionist and said, I'm here to interview the athletics director. The receptionist said, I'm sorry, he's in a meeting. Helms simply said, oh, ok, and turned around and left with our student in tow. This was meant as ironic humor, a commentary on the pathetic state of investigative journalism in the real world of television news. But, what made the segment truly funny—but funny only to those in the know—was the fact that the supposed athletics department office Helms visited was not actually the athletics department. It was a fake athletics department, apparently an office at a Viacom property in Manhattan, Viacom being the parent company that owns both Comedy Central (of which *The Daily Show* is a part) and CBS. Another ironic although not necessarily funny twist was the fact that the crew that visited the campus forgot to follow one of the basic rules of television news, one even beginning television-news-reporting students know to follow: shoot some B-roll (or background video). *The Daily Show* crew neglected to shoot any campus B-roll which they could use to establish the location as Rutgers. Consequently, two days before the segment was scheduled to air, they called me with a frantic request: could I messenger them some B-roll of the campus? They would pay for the messenger. I said sure, and our top-notch broadcast instructor, Steve Miller, got them some campus B-roll shot by one of our best broadcasting students. When the piece aired, the B-roll was a key part of the segment.

Stu Miller, the lead producer, never answered my question about his use of a particular piece of terminology during the interview. Several times he referred to "the tell." I've since asked him several times to explain just what he meant, and his response was he couldn't remember saying that and implied he didn't know what I was talking about. From how he used it during the interview, I suspect it means a question or phrase they use from the correspondent to set up a joke or piece of irony, something that helps gets to the true facts. In his 1965 novel, *The Source,* James A. Michener describes an ancient archeological site in western Galilee "the tell." It is a site that reveals the truth of the past. Perhaps this was the producer's intent. Unfortunately, I don't think he'll ever tell.

Before joining the Rutgers School of Communications, Information and Library Studies as chair of the Department of Journalism and Media Studies in 2002, John V. Pavlik was professor and executive director of the Center for New Media at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and professor director of the School of Communication at San Diego State University.

Television Hoaxes Ahead

From Herodotus and H.G. Wells to Reality TV, hoaxers have always captured large audiences.

By Kenneth Harwood

We can expect a television hoax or two soon. Halloween and April Fools' Day are good times to look for them, yet media hoaxes come in all seasons.

President George W. Bush on January 26, 2005, called upon Jeff Gannon to ask a question during a televised news conference. Mr. Gannon asked the President a seemingly partisan question, using a quotation that marked Democrats as "divorced from reality."

Bloggers went to their Websites to point out Jeff Gannon as a pen name of Jeff Guckert, who worked for Talon News, which was identified as a conservative Website.

Was the exchange between Mr. Bush and Mr. Guckert a hoax? A debate continues to this day, for a hoax is defined in more than one way.

Hoax as a word appeared in English by 1796, some say as a variant of hocus, although evidence of that seems scant. Hoax is neither a recent word like blog (Weblog: A Website usually displaying both a log of thoughts and links to other Websites) nor a word come down from thousands of years ago like flora or fauna.

Often a hoax is defined as a deception by which an amusing or mischievous untruth comes to be believed. Sometimes a hoax is taken to be anything believed by fraud or deception. Yet other times a hoax is defined as something meant to trick or fool.

The best-studied media hoax was Orson Welles's 1938 radio broadcast of "The War of the Worlds."

You might see a hoax in an intent of the hoaxer, or in an effect upon the hoaxee, or both.

Two kinds of media hoaxes are those originated and transmitted by the media and those transmitted but not originated by media.

Among well-known hoaxes both originated and transmitted by media is an April Fools' Day offering from BBC's *Panorama* in 1957. Richard Dimbleby narrated, as he did in 1953 for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth, solemnly pronouncing the dangers of

harvesting Swiss spaghetti in March, when frost could damage the delicate flavor of the strands. Video depicted women taking strands of spaghetti from a tree.

Callers to BBC who asked about growing a spaghetti tree reportedly were advised to "place a sprig of spaghetti in a tin of tomato sauce and hope for the best." Spaghetti then was an unusual dish to many in Britain.

Here was what seemed to be a hoax for amusement and not for social, economic, political or religious purpose.

Arguably the best studied of Halloween media hoaxes was behind a front-page story in *The New York Times* and other media on October 31st, 1938, describing the panic of perhaps thousands of radio listeners who heard a broadcast of "The War of the Worlds," the story of an invasion by creatures from space. The novel by H. G. Wells was directed for radio by Orson Welles, who offered the fiction as live news on the evening of October 30th, and placed the landing in New Jersey. Near the fictional landing place was Princeton University, where social psychologist Hadley Cantril took the opportunity to study panic behavior firsthand and present his findings in his book, *The Invasion from Mars* (1940). The study remains in print as a classic of its kind.

The invasion hoax resulted first in a self-regulatory rule of the broadcasting industry to ban the broadcasting of fiction as news, and then came a similar governmental rule of the Federal Communications Commission.

Swedish Television in 1962 presented a hoax as news. The sole channel in Sweden used black-and-white transmission. On April 1st Kjell Stensson in the news program suggested that a nylon stocking was all that the user of a television needed to create color television, because of the wonders of new technology. After stretching a nylon stocking over the screen, he commented on the color in the picture. Several hundred thousand viewers reportedly attempted the nylon stocking system of converting to color television. On April Fools' Day eight years later color television transmission began in Sweden.

Hoaxes pervade the World Wide Web and its companion Internet email. Often the alert for a supposed email virus is a hoax of widespread circulation by email.

Sometimes a digital message is a social or political hoax such as the Save NPR/PBS Petition. First offered in 1995 as plea to help the public broadcasting services which were under threat of a reduced budget from the federal government, the petition became a hoax by continuing to circulate by email long after the budget was in place. Then hoax became reality again when the same petition continued to circulate digitally in 2005, as reduction of the federal budget came to view again. Chances seem good that the hoax is to reappear through continuing Internet circulation of the petition in years when a federal budget for public broadcasting budget is not being considered.

Media hoaxes persist in print. George Plimpton created Sidd Finch for *Sports Illustrated* magazine of early April, 1985, in time for April Fools' Day. The rookie baseball pitcher pitched at the speed of 168 miles an hour when the fastest pitch then known was at 103. First letters of words in the subheadings of the article spelled the encrypted wish

for the reader's Happy April Fool's Day.

Janet Cooke, a reporter for *The Washington Post*, wrote the story of Jimmy, a child heroin addict. The story was published in the newspaper in 1980 and won a Pulitzer Prize in 1981. Investigation showed that the boy was nowhere to be found, and that some of Janet Cooke's credentials were untrue. She resigned from the *Post* and the prize went back to the awarding organization.

The Hitler diaries were a hoax in a German news magazine, *Der Stern*, in 1983. The diaries also were to appear in *The Sunday Times* in London, until they were identified as forgeries and their publication was cancelled. The diaries were offered as an intimate record of the daily thoughts of Adolf Hitler, leader of Germany in World War II.

Herodotus is known as both the father of lies and the father of history.

Mark Twain wrote for the *Territorial Enterprise* in Virginia City, Nevada. The American West in gold rush days was a place of exaggerations of man and nature, offering tall tales and big works of nature such as rich mines. The *Enterprise* depended upon the arrival of other newspapers by coach or rider for news from elsewhere to fill some of its columns. When news was scarce a tall tale might do. Twain's hoax of the petrified man appeared in 1861, soon after he joined the staff. Twain wrote that a petrified man was found nearby, every detail of his body turned to stone, including the man's wooden leg. Although Twain said that he intended the story to be a parody of such newspaper stories, numbers of his readers took his tale to be true.

Today's most-used engine for searching the World Wide Web is Yahoo, which was invented as a name by Lemuel Gulliver, who is known also as Jonathan Swift, satirist, parodist and hoaxer of the early eighteenth century. Part IV in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* reveals a brutish humanoid beast, the Yahoo. This creature illustrates a sub-human condition, suggesting that the Yahoo search engine is almost human, but not quite human, and less than fully intelligent.

Jonathan Swift in the guise of almanac publisher Isaac Bickerstaff kept Londoners in suspense as April 1, 1708, came near by forecasting the death on March 29th of a noted astrologer, John Partridge, whose predictions Swift took to be rubbish. Londoners waited to see. Late in March Swift published an elegy saying that Partridge died. When Partridge walked into the street on April 1st, many stared at what they took to be a dead man. The angry Partridge wrote a pamphlet denouncing Bickerstaff, to which Bickerstaff replied in print that no living person could write the nonsense in Partridge's predictions. A result of Swift's April Fools' Day hoax was to cast a shadow over Partridge's predictions and lead to the end of their publication.

Hoaxers predate by many centuries the earliest days of printed media. Ancient manuscripts offer hoaxes such as those of the Greek historian Herodotus, who died in 425 B. C. The Histories of Herodotus are hailed as the first great work of prose in the West, where he is known as both the father of lies and the father of history. Herodotus wrote of unicorns as the horned asses

of eastern Libya. There, too, were "dog-headed men and headless men with eyes in their breasts," for which he did not vouch, and the verity of which he did not deny.

Herodotus found his evidence of flying snakes near a mountain pass between Arabia and Egypt. He reported seeing heaps of their skeletons—large ones, small ones, and smaller still—at this place where winged snakes were said to fly to Egypt from Arabia in spring time. Flocks of black ibis birds met the featherless bat-like winged snakes at the pass and killed them there. Herodotus told that Egyptians held the black ibises in reverence because the ibises kept the winged snakes from entering Egypt.

Another sacred bird in Egypt was the phoenix. "I myself have not seen a phoenix," wrote Herodotus, "except in paintings, for it is quite rare; and it visits the country, as is said in Heliopolis, once in 500 years, when the parent bird dies." Then the red-and-gold, eagle-sized bird dies and is born anew, according to the story. Herodotus once more reported without separating fact from fiction. Some people today believe in the unicorn, and some in the phoenix.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, an English Romantic poet, named as poetic faith our willingness to believe hoaxes and other improbabilities for the sake of finding pleasure in them. Willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, wrote Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria* (1817), offers charm and novelty.

Dramatists and other poets ask for imagination to crowd out reality, as William Shakespeare did long before the era of Coleridge in the prolog to *Henry V*. Shakespeare's narrator asked the audience to "think when we talk of horses that you see them." Some hoaxes are so gripping that we believe them at least for now, knowing that they are deceptions.

Unlike the usual poetic hoax the newsworthy hoax often takes us unawares, because the newsworthy hoax does not have our informed consent to be fooled. A hoax we like or favor because its intent or effect seems to be one that might have had our informed consent, if our consent had been asked. A hoax to which we would not have given prior informed consent because we know after the fact its disliked intent or effect is a kind of hoax we usually do not favor. Harmless hoaxes appear to be most likely to be admired.

Willing hoaxes, like unwilling ones, appear to be free of time, place and medium of communication; instead they seem to be fused with the human condition. Television reality programs, for example, offer tours through some of the wide border between fact and fiction. Here non-professional actors confront competition and conflict under conditions specified by television professionals. Large audiences seem to recognize, accept and enjoy the hoaxing. The best reality programs win Emmys. Perhaps near the path to our future is a sign reading, "Caution: Television hoaxes ahead."

Founding dean of the School of Communication and Theater at Temple University and founding director of the School of Communication at the University of Houston, Kenneth Harwood is a retired broadcaster who serves as an adjunct professor of communication at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is a contributing editor of *Media Ethics* magazine.

Live TV Goes Awry

And what the writer learned from a *Studio One* disaster. **By Loring Mandel**

This brief narrative, describing a hapless television program at a particular time in the history of that medium, is written in the hope of being instructive. Life is, if fortune has any pity whatsoever, a series of lessons learned. The experience related here was a small but sharp lesson for me. Otherwise, why tell it? But I was merely an observer, since my part in the matter was over the day before all this took place. Except for the moment of epiphany.

I had been asked by Herb Brodkin, who had replaced Felix Jackson as producer of *Studio One* in 1957, to write an adaptation of a novel for that program. 1957 was a pivotal year in the generally unpalatable history of television. The motion-picture studios, after five years of refusal to acknowledge that television had a future, were opening the floodgates and virtually forcing their contract actors to appear in the electronic format. Slogans such as "Movies are better than ever!" had failed to recapture the audiences enchanted by Uncle Miltie, wrestling and *Broadway Open House*. Now, in 1957, with almost eight hours a week of original live and intimate drama on television, the studios began a more effective attack: they would subsume television and thus both control it and reap its profits. By 1958, a year after the program here described, control of the medium was already well along down Route 66 toward the sunset.

Another sea change in 1957 was the obvious disintegration of the blacklist. Ed Murrow's exposure of Senator Joseph McCarthy in March of 1954 and the Army-McCarthy hearings that Spring had added to a growing backlash, yet even as late as 1956 when CBS fired John Henry Faulk because his name appeared in Red Channels, the blacklist was still alive. The unnamed gentleman at Young & Rubicam who would tell producers whom they could hire and whom they could not, David Susskind advised me, was still in business at his disreputable telephone. But by 1957, producers such as Susskind, Herb Brodkin and John Houseman began to cast their shows without calling that gentleman, and the structure of political blacklisting began to crumble.

It was in that time and environment that I was hired to adapt *The Rice Sprout Song*, a novel by Eileen Chang. It was rigorously anti-communist, which

proved to be ironic. The director hired by Herb for this show was Sidney Lumet, a preeminent television director rapidly approaching the beginning of a exceptional film career. And Sidney, to whom we should all be grateful, cast the show with actors almost exclusively from the blacklist. Some had not worked in TV for years and had seen their careers, once glowing with promise, fallen to nothing. Olive Deering, Vivian Nathan, David Opatoshu and David Stewart were among the leads; Dolores Sutton and Michael Tolan had important feature roles. Only the Canadian actor, John Colicos, cast in the lead opposite Olive Deering, had no background in or knowledge of the Yiddish theater or the Group Theater. Sidney, of course, was the son of a well-known Yiddish actor; his instant rapport with the cast was a joy, and the first two days of rehearsal at Central Plaza on the Lower East Side were spent around the rehearsal table swapping stories of the late lamented past. Also, since Sidney was married to Gloria Vanderbilt at the time, there were a few stories of life among the wealthiest. Lunch was at Moskowitz and Lupowitz. After the rehearsal period, the show was moved to the upper east side, into a studio gracelessly fashioned from a former

Sidney Lumet cast the show with actors almost exclusively from the blacklist.

Herb Brodkin, *Studio One* producer in 1957.

Photofest

movie theater.

The story line of *The Rice Sprout Song* is not easy to describe: A woman from a cruelly poor village returns from the city where she had gone to earn money. She is greeted by her starving family. Her husband and little daughter are barely surviving, and she is at first unwilling to divide their small portion of rice with her brother and sister-in-law, who share the hut. Her brother is too weak to work, to even get out of bed, her sister-in-law is uncompromisingly bitter toward her. And her parents, old and unable to work, can only sit and shake their heads at their daughter's troublesome anti-communism. There is also the cheerful, glad-handing official who is constantly demanding a greater tax tribute of the family's rice allotment to the government. When a few sacks of rice are to be distributed, a riot ensues as the starving villagers try to empty the granary, and the woman's husband in the forefront of the action is shot and killed. The woman's elderly parents denounce her to the official. Her small daughter is given away and she is banished from the village, to wander out in the snow of a winter storm to certainly perish.

This was live television; no stopping, no do-overs: when the red light comes on it goes.

Sidney wanted this to play as realistically as possible, as I'm sure Herb did as well. The snow effect was decided upon, some kind of gypsum flakes to cover the set and drift and blow in the final scene. All these Jews (and John Colicos) were to be made up with Oriental eyes. By that time in the process, I was just an observer. With all the technical problems in doing such a show, live, in this small studio, there was little interest in my revising the stolid dialogue.

The dress was difficult. Because of the artificial snow, the actors were suffering certain gypsum-induced respiratory consequences and the coughing was considerable. The greater problem was the make-up. Up above the balcony of the theater, in what was the former projectionist's booth, a make-up room had been created. Cosmetic artists of questionable ability were struggling with the revising of all the actors' eyes. It was not going well. And this was live television; no stopping, no do-overs, when the red light comes on it goes.

Safely out of the way, I sat in a small room that might have been the theater manager's office. I shared this room with a representative of Westinghouse, the sponsor, and his account executive from Grey Advertising sitting beside him. The account executive, with the same cheerfulness as the communist official in the play, sweated as he insisted to his client that a classic television drama was about to be uncorked. A monitor showed what would be going out over the air.

Five minutes before air time, Olive Deering was still up in the make-up room. This performance was to be her return to television after years on the blacklist, and her make-up was a disaster: One eye was open, the other was pasted half-shut. She refused to come down to the set. The assistant director couldn't get her to move. Two minutes to air time. Sidney, faced with imminent catastrophe, ran from the director's booth, up the stairs two at a time into the balcony and forcibly dragged Olive

down toward the set, while she wailed at the top of her very theatrical voice, "These fucking amateurs, look what they've done to me!" Sidney pushed her onto the set and returned to the booth. The red light came on.

It was more like a runaway truck than a television play.

I have no doubt that Olive Deering's anger brought an intensity to her performance that exceeded her considerable professionalism and talent. But it was far more than that; her eyes—or at least the fully open one—were aflame with rage and the rest of the cast, as the drama progressed, grew more apprehensive. She was racing, leapfrogging her lines. Her fury surpassed my peculiar as-translated dialogue and the dramatic structure itself; sections from acts were transposed into other acts, the play staggered along as I watched in horror in the sponsor's private viewing room. The sponsor and the nervous rep from Grey Advertising watched in suffocating silence. It was more like a runaway truck than a television play. One could sense the drumbeat even through two light-hearted encounters between Betty Furness and Westinghouse kitchen appliances. Once back into the drama, the agonizing story piled tragedy upon tragedy and proceeded with more than intended speed to its conclusion, a minute or two early.

And there was my epiphany, delivered in the quavering voice of the advertising man to his stunned client. They had just witnessed a ramshackle performance in which starving people are humiliated, killed, a young daughter taken from her mother, parents betraying their children, consumption, bitterness and finally an exile into certain death. The vision of the ravaged face of Olive Deering faded first into the white of a gypsum snowfall, then to a black screen. A moment passed, and the advertising man turned to his client, a smile stretching his mouth. His fist pumped the air in front of his client's face as he said, "You know, somehow I have the feeling she's gonna make it!"

And as he said it, I knew he not only *had* to believe it, he *did* believe it. Who better to fill us with faith in those things utterly undeserving of it, to persuade us that illusion is more important than reality, that desire can vanquish rationality? Life's lessons come often unbidden, but when they do, one must embrace them. The show was a disaster, but somehow I had the feeling I was going to make it. So far, so good.

Loring Mandel started writing for television in 1949. He has been president of the Writers Guild of America East, National Chairman of the WGA, a Governor of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences and has received numerous awards, including two Emmys, the Sylvania and Peabody Awards and three Writers Guild Awards. His most recent credit is the HBO film "Conspiracy," which he has now adapted for the stage.

Ralph Kramden and *The Honeymooners* Turn the Big 5 0 (Sort of)

Jackie Gleason still represents a comic reflection of postwar urban America. **By Ron Simon**

Many traditions kick off a new year in Manhattan: the dropping of the ball at Times Square, a midnight run in Central Park, and the marathon screening of *The Honeymooners* on local television. As New Yorkers begin to make our resolutions on January 1st, Ralph Kramden is there to let them know that their greatest plans do not always pan out—a reality check for the most confident and audacious. For Ralph and most dreamers, the words of downtrodden wife Alice ring true as a corrective to overindulgent imaginations: "the biggest thing you ever got into was your pants."

2005 marks the 50th anniversary of one of television's best-remembered and most resonant comedies. Regular TV watchers know the Kramdens and their neighbors the Nortons from the one and only season of programs that aired during the 1955-56 season. Hailed as the "classic thirty-nine" by television aficionados, this single season has had perhaps the biggest influence on American TV culture than any other. In syndication or DVD, several generations of viewers have identified with Jackie Gleason's incarnation of Ralph Kramden, that aggravated bus driver from Brooklyn whose dreams of social and economic mobility never come true. Kramden has also served as the template for all future working-class underdogs on television—Fred Flintstone, Archie Bunker, Roseanne and Homer Simpson.

Actually, it is hard to pin down an actual anniversary date for *The Honeymooners*. Gleason first

The Honeymooners **(l. to r.) Jackie Gleason, Art Carney, Audrey Meadows and Joyce Randolph**

introduced his alter ego five years earlier on his DuMont variety series, *Cavalcade of Stars.* Gleason's original writers, Joe Bigelow and Harry Crane, wanted to call the sketch "The Beasts," but Gleason understood that beneath Ralph's blustery exterior was a good—if flawed—heart. The early *Honeymooners* routines were rooted in a spartan realism: Gleason instructed his writers to "make it the way people really live," and the comedian gave his character the address of his own boyhood residence, 358 Chauncey Street.

I acquired the kinescope of the first *Honeymooners* sketch in the mid-eighties for the then Museum of Broadcasting from the estate of writer Snag Werris. Werris had written jokes for Gleason for many years and supposedly had traded Gleason a bottle of booze for this historic film. I was then able to date the kinescope by a reference to another Ralph, Ralph Branca of the Brooklyn Dodgers. In his opening monologue Gleason saluted Branca for his bravery in defeat after serving the infamous pitch to Bobby Thomson during the playoff game against the New York Giants two days earlier (inspiring the call "The Giants win the pennant! The Giants win the pennant!"). Like that Ralph, Kramden would suffer frustration and defeat. So October 5, 1951 might be viewed as Ralph Kramden's birthday, but the *Honeymooner* universe was just taking shape.

The first sketch was a verbal battle for supremacy in a minimally furnished apartment, with the original Alice played by a veteran character actress Pert Kelton. These DuMont drafts also gave a stark insight into the demands

Photofest

and compromises of marriage, offering a kind of kitchen-sink comedy of insult and affection. The six-minute routine, which also featured Art Carney as a policeman, proved so popular that Gleason and his writers created new struggles for the couple. Early on, they added the upstairs neighbors, the Nortons, literally from the lower depths; Carney would be sewer worker Ed Norton throughout *The Honeymooners* run of four decades and the first Trixie would be emerging Broadway actress Elaine Stritch. However, as in the first battle, the beleaguered Kramden would always reconcile with his equally exasperated wife at the end of their travail, prompting the tag line that tugged the heart, "Baby, You're the Greatest!"

A year later, William Paley of CBS lured Gleason and his staff from the impoverished DuMont network; Gleason was given a much larger budget to produce a weekly, live extravaganza on Saturday nights; the show would be moving uptown but the Kramdens would remain in the boroughs. A younger actress, Audrey Meadows, was hired to replace Kelton, who suffered from a combination of heart problems and blacklisting difficulties. In fact, Meadows, who previously worked with Bob and Ray, was seventeen years younger than Kelton, making the *Honeymooner* comedy less harsh and shrewish, but ultimately more touching and compassionate. Gleason had created many memorable characters for his variety series—Joe the Bartender, the Poor Soul, and Reginald Van Gleason III—but the audiences wanted more of the Kramdens. During the first three years, the *Honeymooner* sketches grew from 10 minutes to over 40. These sketches would become a distant memory until they were rediscovered in the mid-eighties.

The Honeymooners was among the last of the urban, working-class comedies on fifties television.

In 1955 the Buick Motor Company offered Gleason six million dollars to produce *The Honeymooners* as a weekly situation comedy for two years. The corpulent comedian formed his own production company and used a new film/video technology, the Electronicam process, to record the series live on film. The Electronicam system was developed by Gleason's old employer DuMont and consisted of a film and video camera sharing the same lens. This version of *The Honeymooners* was shot twice a week before an audience of 1,100 people. During the first season Gleason was disturbed by the amount of rehearsal time and felt that these recorded episodes lacked the spontaneity and originality of the live sketches. He was also nervous that his show was being tied in the ratings by a new hot singer who might be described as the anti-Gleason, the very laid-back Perry Como He discontinued the series after 39 programs and decided to return to the live, variety format. Disappointed with the whole experience, he later sold the films and syndication rights to CBS for a million and half-dollars, a bad financial decision that a Ralph Kramden might have transacted.

The Honeymooners was among the last of the urban, working-class comedies on fifties television. As the nation experienced postwar prosperity,

so did the families on television. The Nelsons (*The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriett)*, the Andersons (*Father Knows Best*), and the Cleavers (*Leave It to Beaver*) lived in the tree-lined secure, suburbs, all enjoying the material emblems of the American dream. By 1955, even the prototypical proletariat family, the Goldbergs, had moved out of the city, from the Bronx to suburban bliss of Haverville. The Kramdens were the exception. Ralph and his suffering wife, Alice, were stuck in the urban wilderness—a cold-water apartment above a noisy, New York street, without any creature comforts of Eisenhower conformity. Their main possessions were a plain dining table and a depression icebox. They shared these lower-class frustrations with their disconsolate neighbors, the Nortons. Ever slow-witted Ed continued to work in the grimy sewers, while his wife Trixie, played by Joyce Randolph since 1952, regularly commiserated with Alice about their common hardships.

Materially and spiritually, the Kramdens and the Nortons were out of sync with their suburban counterparts. The couples were childless in a baby boom USA, although Ralph and Ed often resembled irresponsible teenagers. The two icons of fifties America, the car and the home, were absent from Honeymoonerland. In the first filmed episode, broadcast on October 1, 1955, the Nortons and Kramdens debated the cost of owning a television set. By that time, more than half the country had made the purchase with an even greater percentage of TV families taking the electronic leap into the future. Much of *The Honeymooners* comedy revolved around the couples trying to get rich quick with Ralph constantly conning the gullible Ed into one scheme after another. In the classic episode, "Better Living Through Television," Ed and Ralph appear in a live television commercial to sell Happy Housewife Helpers as the Chef of the Past and the Chef of the Future respectively. The helper went over as well as such past ideas as wallpaper that glows in the dark and no-cal pizza. The yearning to escape near poverty reflected the dreams of Jackie's own adolescence. Gleason implicitly understood that if his working class comedy wasn't credible, "nobody's going to laugh."

Sketches about *The Honeymooners* remained a prominent part of Gleason's succeeding television series with the writers trying to do something unusual with the trusted material. During the 1956-7 season of *The Jackie Gleason Show,* the Kramdens and the Nortons took a live trip to Europe, replete with musical numbers. At the end of the season, Carney left the series, and Gleason did not revive the sketch until his sixties extravaganza, *The American Scene Magazine.* When Carney was available, Gleason revived the sketch on videotape, often with new cast members. Sue Ane Langdon and later Sheila MacRae played Alice, while Patricia Wilson and Jean Kean were recruited for Trixie. During the 1966-67 season, the "Great One" even decided to remake the "Trip to Europe" musicals into color spectaculars, bubbling with 40 new numbers. Despite the permutations, the familiar catchphrases remained. Who doesn't know Ralph's stock phrases to Alice: "One of these days. . . Pow! Right in the kisser!;" "Bang! Zoom;" and "To the moon." (Although these lines suggest an elemental rage, feminists have embraced Alice as a

strong character for her handling of Ralph's temper tantrums.) And Ed's greeting to Kramden became a classic line of fellowship: "Hiya there, Ralphie boy."

After his variety series ended in 1970, Gleason produced four more *Honeymooner* specials with Carney and the returning Meadows. Till the bitter end, the couple remained in their Bensonhurst digs; changing mores would not affect the Kramden's lifestyle. Despite color and reunions, Ralph and Alice remained fixed in the popular imagination because the thirty-nine episodes of *The Honeymooners*, broadcast in lowly black and white, were a perennial success in syndication. For over 20 years a local station in Manhattan played them every night, resulting in an avid cult following. The ritualistic themes and incantatory dialogue inspired the formation of the club RALPH (Royal Association for the Longevity and Preservation of the Honeymooners).

Finding these *Honeymooners* kinescopes was equivalent to the discovery of King Tut's tomb.

But the preservation of the complete *Honeymooner* oeuvre came about almost by complete accident. Working with a CBS archivist, I was able to located four kinescopes of live *Honeymooners* in the network's vault in New Jersey. These unseen live sketches created great exultation, almost TV's equivalent to discovering the tomb of King Tut. Crowds lined around the block to expand their *Honeymooner* knowledge. The Museum was besieged by calls from distributors and cable services about acquiring these rarities. As the hysteria built, Jackie Gleason, always with impeccable timing, revealed that he had most of the live sketches from his CBS series in a Miami vault. His "lost" episodes soon found an afterlife on cable and the home-video market. The idea of lost anything in television soon took on a mystique, and became a powerful marketing tool. Ralph Kramden had finally struck it rich.

Why does *The Honeymooners* still speak to the 21st century while other fifties phenomena, such as hula hoops and David Crockett caps, have been relegated to Ebay's dustbin? No program in the history of television has been seen in so many incarnations: aired live, on film and tape; in black-and-white and color; as sketch comedy, situation comedy, and musical, succeeding on network, syndicated, and cable television as well as home video and DVD. And the lead character didn't even have a TV! Generations of viewers, cutting across lines of race and class, have found profound meaning in the show's relative simplicity. Earlier this year an African-American version of *The Honeymooners* was theatrically released. The star of the film, Cedric the Entertainer, acknowledged Ralph's appeal universal: "He's a little bit gruff, and he can be tough on his friends, but Ralph is lovable because he is Everyman." But this second honeymoon proved rocky: critics lauded the original once again, but questioned the need for an update.

Fifty years on, *The Honeymooners* remains a comic reflection of postwar urban America, with Ralph Kramden epitomizing the ardent but misguided believer in personal advancement.

The search for the American Dream had turned Arthur Miller's salesman, Willy Loman, into a tragic hero; the same quest made Ralph into a comic archetype. Like Jack Benny, Gleason realized that we love to identify with our failings. Even downtown hipsters have embraced those regular guys from Brooklyn. *Village Voice* critic J. Hoberman writes "these days, urban sophisticates are apt to appreciate *The Honeymooners* for its beatnik poverty and minimalist aesthetic." At its best, *The Honeymooners* seems authentic and real, with Gleason projecting an in-your-face immediacy of frustration and desperation. He continues to yell to that inner Ralph in us all. Happy birthday, Ralph. Your shoes and pants will be hard to fill.

Ron Simon is curator of television and radio at The Museum of Television & Radio and has organized several retrospectives to Jackie Gleason and *The Honeymooners*.

Bewitched: Rethinking a Sixties Sitcom Classic

A pop culture ruminator takes issue with conventional feminist wisdom. **By Cary O'Dell**

The cultural critics have not been kind. *Bewitched*, the hit series that aired on ABC from 1964-1972 about a beautiful witch and her oh-so-mortal husband, has been called "the most sexist program of all time."

Feminist scholars have written that the premise of the show—a man forbidding the woman in his life to use her natural talents—is clearly a metaphor for the male backlash to the burgeoning woman's movement in the wake of the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*.

But I don't think that's the case at all. *Bewitched*, like *I Love Lucy* (another show unfairly criticized), is a series dominated by female energy. While Lucy attempts to break out of her traditional wife/mother role by any means necessary, Samantha Stevens finds fulfillment in hearth and home. If feminism is fundamentally about having choices, then *Bewitched* supports the notion.

Despite the brouhaha regarding Darrin's stance on his wife's witchcraft, the great majority of *Bewitched* episodes focus instead on the troublesome spells that Samantha's mother, Endora, inflicts on her son-in-law. Or on some strange witch disease that Samantha falls prey to requiring the immediate attention of Dr. Bombay (i.e. "Dr. Bombay, Dr. Bombay, Come right away!").

Still other episodes are centered around Sam's otherworldly relatives causing problems in the Stevens household either via mischievousness (like anytime Sam's swinging sister Serena stopped by) or via incompetence (as when Sam's senile Auntie Clara popped in).

What almost all these episodes do have in common—besides one wild meltdown each by Darrin—is how Sam's witchcraft combined with her

quick thinking always ends up saving the day. As Darrin fumes and the boss becomes crazed, Samantha with either a simple spell or a twitch of her nose, rights wrongs, cures the sick, and saves Darrin and Larry Tate's "big account."

Sometimes Samantha's magic even saves a life—including sometimes Darrin's. Despite her ability to rescue her husband and others from disaster, with all the havoc that the witchcraft of others inflicted on her household, is it any wonder that Sam, too, is by and large willing to forgo her powers? The very fact that Samantha pursues and marries a mortal suggests that she herself is not only a rebel in some regard but that she is also not adverse to living a life without witchcraft.

Elizabeth Montgomery (left) as Samantha, with Agnes Moorhead as her mother, Endora.

Photofest

This desire for "normalcy" in the suburbs might very well have struck a resonating chord at a time when political, social and technological changes were a constant.

It can be argued that there's an almost quasi-Amish aspect to Sam's choice not to use her powers. Just as the Amish could ease their lives by employing modern technology and don't, Samantha, whose life could be highly streamlined via magic, also resists.

David Marc, in his book *Comic Visions,* likens Samantha's magic to the tranquilizers ("mother's little helpers") popularly over-prescribed at the time. In Sam's refusal to indulge in shortcuts and easy-outs, Samantha Stevens is, essentially, just saying "no."

Samantha's restraint against using her magic, and Darrin's desire that she do so, is an expression of both of their wishes for a mortal, normal life. This desire for "normalcy" in the suburbs might very well have struck a resonating chord with America in the 1960s and

early '70s, a time when political, social and technological changes were a constant.

Granted, the choice to withhold magic does, at first, seem an odd one. If one has magical powers, why not sue them at least for the betterment of your loved ones and the world? *Bewitched* addressed this issue directly during its run. In the episode "A Is for Aardvark" Darrin finds himself confined to bed and to try to help him, Samantha gives him some temporary magical powers. Unfortunately, Darrin soon goes wild with his newly acquired abilities until he realizes its drawback: when you don't have to work for things they don't mean as much.

True, Samantha, via her powers, could have anything she wanted, but what she wanted most of all was Darrin and the normal life he represented. In one episode, Samantha says:

"Now listen to me Darrin, you may have given up but I haven't. I enjoy taking care of my husband and my children in the everyday mortal way. I like things the way they are. If I didn't, I wouldn't be here."

It's a point well taken. Let's not forget that Samantha has the ability to twitch herself and her kids right out of the suburbs and away from Darrin forever. Or to turn Darrin into a frog or a rock. Her power gives her access to ultimate freedom—if she chooses.

Just as Samantha was far from the oppressed housewife, Darrin, despite his perpetual state of befuddlement, was far from the monster he is often remembered as either. Despite the endless amount of torture mother-in-law Endora inflicted on him, Darrin never threatened to walk away from his marriage or responsibilities. And Samantha knows and appreciates this. In one episode she says to him, "[You're] up to your neck in witches… Are you ever sorry you married me?"

To which Darrin replies, "No, I couldn't live without you."

Endora, played with relish by actress Agnes Moorhead, has been described as an "intergalactic Auntie Mame." She was an unrepentant divorcee who never considered her age a limit to her desires. Endora was a total troublemaker; quite literally the mother-in-law from hell. She never referred to Darrin by his real name, preferring such alterations as Delwood, Dobbin and Durwood. In one episode, Darrin intones that Endora learned cruelty from the Marquis de Sade. Endora corrects him, "It's not true… He was just a classmate."

Darrin and the rest of mankind was/is no match for Endora. If Samantha is supposedly the poster child for restrained womanhood, then Endora is the other end of the spectrum—representing what one risks when one attempts to suppress feminine power. Endora can be viewed as all of witchcraft's revenge: payback to the mortals who have attempted to persecute them. And in this show, literally and figuratively, payback is a mother.

Bewitched becomes an allegory about the responsible restraint of power—of possessing certain abilities or options and choosing not to exercize them.

Among the readings, *Bewitched* can also be viewed as a metaphor for the

1960s with Samantha taking on the role of pseudo-hippie. Just as the hippie culture of the time stressed a return to a more hands-on and natural approach to life, so too does Sam with her desire to do the cooking, cleaning and scrubbing without taking the easy way out (i.e. a twitch of her nose).

In this approach to the series, then, Endora, with her addiction to superficiality and her preference for speed, represents an older, bourgeoisie generation. Just as many parents of the era couldn't understand the commune living and other choices that their children were making, Endora could not comprehend Sam's wish not to "live life to the fullest" i.e. consort with the other witches (the "in" crowd) or fly around the world (as if she were part of that newly named group, the "jet set"). In one episode, Endora even goes so far as to accuse her daughter of ignoring "her heredity, her birthright." Therefore, the relationship between mother and daughter is a clash of generations and ideals. And, unfortunately for him, Darrin is just the pawn stuck in the middle of these two powerful, equally stubborn women.

Continuing this thought — of possessing certain abilities or options and choosing not to exercise them — *Bewitched* then becomes an allegory about the responsible restraint of power: one should not "twitch" just because we can, we will not split the atom.

Another interpretation of *Bewitched* is to view it as Freudian theory. Endora, with her life devoted to pleasure, represents the instant gratification demanded of the id; Darrin, by contrast, is the overly cautious ego; and Samantha, is the mediator between the two, the superego.

Along with being this series' mediator, equalizer and savior, Samantha is also its moral and ethical center. Not only in her refusal to use her powers selfishly, but also in balancing the alternating temptations of indulgence, as represented by Endora's devil-may-care lifestyle, and greed, as represented by Larry Tate and the advertising industry.

If there's more than one way to skin a cat, there are surely many ways to interpret a television series. Some might conclude that Sam is the victim of a patriarchal society. But my preference is to see the character brought to life by the wonderful Elizabeth Montgomery as a determined young woman who makes her own life choices and finds the inner strength to live by them.

Cary O'Dell is an archivist at the Library of American Broadcasting and is the author of *Women Pioneers in Television.*

Forty Plus

Why the made-for-TV movie endures.

By **Martin Gostanian**

Prime-time television loves to celebrate anniversaries divisible by five. Highly promoted clip shows punctuated with star recollections, like the recent 30-year *Happy Days* retrospective, are a small-screen tradition. But an important anniversary went completely unnoticed in the 2004-05 season: on October 7, 1964, NBC ran the first movie made specifically for television.

Hollywood films were scant on television in the early years of the medium because the major studios were not eager to distribute their attractive feature titles to broadcasters. A widespread assumption is that this aversion was essentially motivated by fear of television as a competitor, but it stemmed more from the desire of these elite studios to fully control their films and realize greater profits by establishing their own television enterprises and broadcasting their motion picture properties exclusively.

The biggest obstacle to the major studios' foray into television was the Federal Communications Commission, which barred the dominant Hollywood studios from entering television as station operators. After the government convicted the "Big Five" studios (MGM, 20th-Century Fox, Paramount, RKO and Warner Brothers) of film production-distribution-exhibition monopolies in 1948, they became ineligible to apply for TV licenses because the FCC denied such permits to concerns that violated federal anti-trust laws.

That same year, the FCC imposed a freeze on new TV license applications and the release of the UHF bandwidth, which further restricted the key studios from television. In the aftermath of the TV freeze, the FCC restrained Hollywood's experimentation and development of pay TV systems and theater television, both which relied heavily on the now-suspended UHF signals. By the time the Big Five were forced to divest their theater holdings in 1950, they were clearly frustrated with the new medium. In response, the major studios were more resolute to safeguard and withhold their prized motion picture catalogs from the grip of broadcasters.

Nevertheless, Hollywood could not ignore how television's explosive rise over the next several years eroded ticket sales. By 1954, annual movie theatre patronage had dropped by 50% of what in had been in 1946, when cinema attendance peaked at 90,000,000 patrons weekly. Out of desperation to supplement revenues, the major Hollywood studios finally acquiesced to television – starting with the sale of RKO Pictures by Howard Hughes

to General Tire & Rubber's General Teleradio division in 1954, which gave the broadcasting group access to RKO's pre-1948 movie library that would run on its bicoastal TV stations as *The Million Dollar Movie*. The next year, the other major studios followed suit by opening their hallowed vaults and licensing their pre-1948 feature films for broadcast, bringing the total to nearly 2,000.

As more and more pre-1948 film titles were being released to television during the last half of the 1950s, the medium's voracious appetite for such fare rapidly exhausted these inventories, resulting in excessive repeats of these motion pictures. At the dawn of the 1960's, viewers and stations were clamoring for more contemporary movies on television, which meant studios would have to dip into their post-1948 film caches. However, these post-1948 features would be at a premium because not only did Hollywood rely on its recent hits for extra profits in theatrical re-release, but pending guild contracts also required studios to pay residuals for the licensing of post-1948 films for broadcasting.

At this time, NBC faced a crossroads in terms of its programming, prestige and viewership. The innovative network found itself teetering at third place overall at the end of the 1950's, not only due to CBS's superior stable of stars, but also from ratings victories enjoyed by ABC with its roster of slick, action-packed series produced at Warner Brothers. Losing ground with programs that weren't captivating, inventive or that were skewed to older audiences, NBC took a bold step by paying $25 million to 20th Century-

Scott Jacoby (left) and Hal Holbrook in "That Certain Summer."

Photofest

Fox to license 50 post-1950 features in 1961, which the network broadcast on its first prime-time venture into motion pictures, *NBC Saturday Night at the Movies*. Right from its debut on September 23, 1961 with *How to Marry a Millionaire* (1953), the series was well received and would eventually dominate Saturday nights by the Fall 1966 Season.

The reason this program succeeded was two-fold. The films aired were relatively new and offered several well-known box office sensations, and more crucially, almost half of the films were shot in and telecast in color, which strategically tapped the burgeoning market for color TV sets (which was lucrative for NBC's parent, RCA) and addressed audience desires for more color programs. In turn, this win for NBC prompted ABC and CBS to create their own prime-time movie vehicles over the next few years. NBC scheduled another movie entry, *NBC Monday Night at the Movies* in 1963, with *Wednesday Night at the Movies* debuting the next season. Despite solid ratings with *Saturday Night at the Movies* and striking more licensing deals with other studios, NBC began to fret that its available stockpile of contemporary films for broadcast were starting to dwindle. The network also bemoaned that studios were making the rights to televise such recent hit features more expensive, especially when NBC found itself in bidding wars with ABC's *Sunday Night Movie*.

This quandary weighed heavily on Grant Tinker, NBC's west coast Vice-President of Programs, and on the major studios, which greatly depended on supplying television programs as well as recent run features to the networks as vital streams of income, which in turn helped finance their increasingly more expensive cinematic productions. Since television production at this time was usually at a standstill from mid-February through May, studios sought ways to fill this void.

NBC deemed *The Killers* too violent for broadcast and also rejected it in deference to the Kennedy assassination.

One such studio was Universal, which had been purchased by MCA in 1962 and had enhanced MCA's flourishing television production arm of Revue Studios. The issue of making television production a year round activity at Universal had been a priority not only to the corporation's visionary chairman, Lew Wasserman, but also to Jennings Lang, Universal's head of television production and chief pitcher of all new series and projects to the networks. Lang had also earned a reputation to openly and creatively experiment with television.

NBC arranged a three-picture deal with Universal for the fall 1964 season. Originally, the first TV movie produced and scheduled to christen *NBC Wednesday Night at the Movies* on October 7, 1964 was to be *The Killers*, a second film version of Ernest Hemingway's novella with John Cassavetes, Angie Dickinson, Lee Marvin, and in his final performance, Ronald Reagan as a misogynistic crime boss. When the finished telefilm was screened by NBC and its Broadcast Standards division, they deemed it too violent for broadcast. NBC also rejected *The Killers* in deference to the Kennedy

assassination, based on such "offensive" scenes as a zoom shot mimicking a sniper's point-of-view.

NBC opted to introduce *Wednesday Night at the Movies* with its second TV movie contracted with Universal, *See How They Run*. Ratings for *See How They Run* were not exceptional, but it did finish second place overall in its time slot. *The Hanged Man*, the third NBC-Universal telefilm, aired on November 18, 1964 and did nearly the same Nielsen numbers as *See How They Run*.

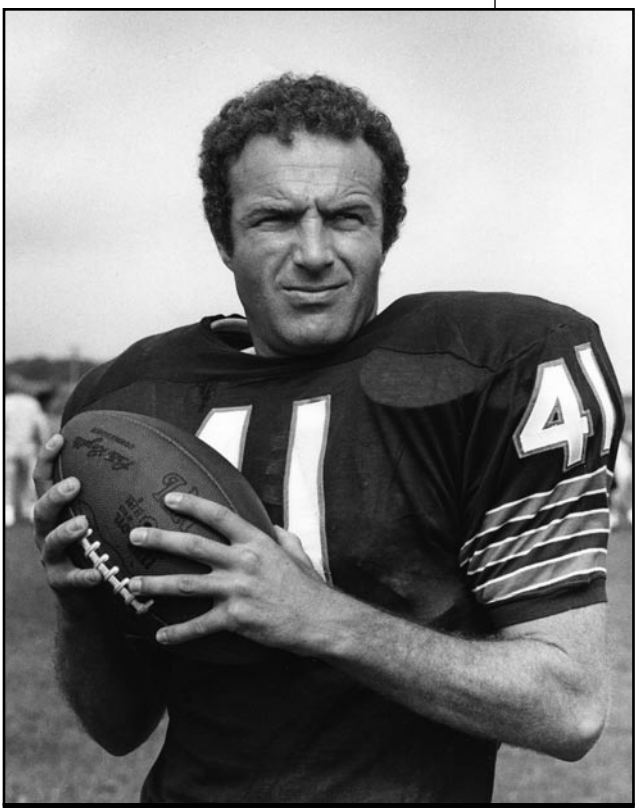
Nevertheless, these modest efforts confirmed that NBC's gamble to commission original, full-length feature films exclusively for television and position them as departure programming could hold their own opposite well-established, ratings-dominant series. This was a pivotal issue because it defied traditional network conviction that viewers bonded with a "family" of regular weekly characters.

While the made-for-TV movie concept held much promise, further telefilm commitments were on hold until 1966. That year, Universal produced *Fame Is the Name of the Game*, another two-hour TV movie for *NBC Saturday Night at the Movies*. This time, the telefilm did exceptionally well in the ratings – so well that it became the first TV movie to inspire a weekly television series, which debuted two years later. Less than three weeks after the encouraging showing of *Fame*, NBC aired another Universal telefilm for its *NBC Tuesday Night at the Movies* (moved over from Wednesdays the season earlier) on December 13, 1966. Entitled *The Doomsday Flight,* the TV movie was written by Rod Serling, and it reaped the second highest rating among all three networks for the entire 1966-1967 season.

That same season, *Tuesday Night at the Movies* became fertile ground for a slew of original telefilms produced by Universal that not only drew impressive ratings but also became a test ground for program development. Many two-hour "World Premieres" that season began to serve a dual purpose as extended-length pilots for regularly scheduled shows if ratings for such movies proved favorable, though these were shot as complete, stand-alone telefilms. This strategy impressively bolstered NBC's viewership, and the network confidently added more movie nights and long-form 90-minute series over the next five years. From 1967 to 1972, a bevy of weekly, revolving ("wheel" format) and umbrella series were spawned from NBC's dynamic programming move, most notably *Ironside, Columbo, The Name of the Game, Night Gallery, McCloud, Then Came Bronson, The Bold Ones, Banacek* and *McMillan and Wife* (which began and revolved with *Columbo* and *McCloud* on the *NBC Mystery Movie* in 1971).

Hawaii Five-O ushered one of the most popular programs in CBS's history for the next 12 years.

These triumphs did not escape the notice of CBS and ABC. CBS, already enjoying its overall number one position in the mid-1960s, made a late start in 1968 to explore the terrain of made-for-television movies, but its first TV movie effort, *Hawaii Five-O* ushered one of the most popular programs in CBS's history for the next 12 years. While this preliminary effort duplicated NBC's



James Caan in "Brian's Song."

Photofest

tactic of the TV movie as series test pilot, CBS was content to concentrate on established program formats, with emphasis on sitcoms, detective dramas and variety shows. Over the next several years, the network remained truer to the original conception of the TV movie as a customized motion picture for television.

Meanwhile, ABC was intrigued by NBC's triumphs with TV movies from the start, and given ABC's track record for unorthodox yet surprisingly popular programming attempts, such as airing *Peyton Place* and *Batman* on two consecutive nights per week, it was willing to explore the TV movie frontier. After only broadcasting two TV movies from 1967 through the end of 1968, fortunes turned in ABC's favor when it picked up an option with Universal in 1969 to air another telefilm, and this time the result would be more remarkable than ABC could have wished.

On March 26, 1969, ABC presented *Marcus Welby, M.D.,* which not only swept the ratings for that night, but it sired the overall Number One series of the same name for the 1969-1970 Season. Yet *Marcus Welby, M.D.* was the tip of the iceberg that ABC was to exploit from the TV movie.

Produer Roy Huggins was at the forefront to refine and streamline the made-for-TV movie into something even more captivating and influential. He conceived the idea of a 90-minute TV movie anthology series called "Movie of the Week." After pitching his idea to all three networks, Huggins convinced Leonard Goldberg, ABC's Vice-President of Programming, and program executive Barry Diller, that the concept could work. Huggins clinched his proposal by theorizing that slotting the TV movie series at 8:30 p.m. would get a half-hour jump on other shows and telefilms airing at 9 p.m., and that the remaining hour from 10 to 11 p.m. could be filled with a variety show, still a highly popular format at that time.

After a breakdown in negotiations with Universal over budgeting, ABC struck a 26-movie deal with a variety of talented independent producers such as

Aaron Spelling, Quinn Martin, David Wolper and Dan Curtis to forge ahead with its proposed debut of the *ABC Movie of the Week* in Fall 1969. At first, the series offered, as Huggins urged to ABC, a balance of action, suspense and mysteries with an occasional western. The idea was that once the vehicle was established, anything could be possible for content. The approach seemingly worked, and by the 1970-1971 Season, *The Movie of the Week* was a Top Ten favorite. Going into the 1971-1972 Season, the series offered many engaging and suspenseful TV movies, such *Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones, Duel* and *When Michael Calls.*

It was the November 30, 1971 airing of *Brian's Song* that was a true landmark, though. *The Movie of the Week* began to redefine itself as a showcase for powerful, emotionally compelling telefilms that explored contemporary issues while focusing on the unfolding personal dramas, with each facet handled with care, sensitivity and an open mind. *The Movie of the Week* became a standout that season not only for its overall critical praise, but also as a regular "must-see" destination for viewers. Of the 23 highest-rated films shown on television during the 1971-1972 Season, 18 of them were original *Movie of the Week* offerings.

Since its debut more than four decades ago, the TV movie has become a fixture in American popular culture. At each stage in its history it gave voice and vision to the issues of the day. At its best, the genre successfully expressed the emotional outlook of the viewing public.

Martin Gostanian is a free-lance writer, script reader and historical broadcasting research/archivist based in Los Angeles. He is also a part-time library-services associate at the Museum of Television and Radio in Beverly Hills.

REVIEW AND COMMENT

Objection!: How High-Priced Defense Attorneys, Celebrity Defendants, and a 24/7 Media Have Hijacked Our Criminal Justice System

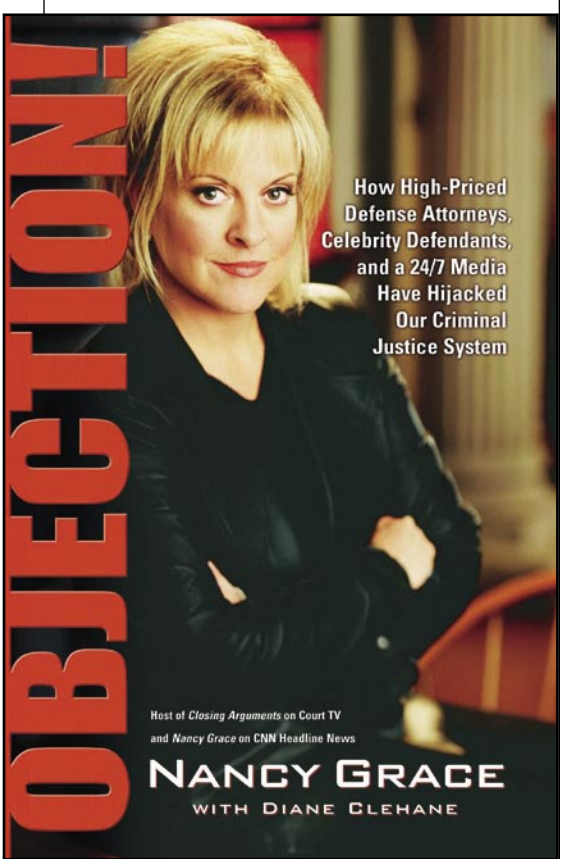
By Nancy Grace with Diane Clehane

Hyperion, New York
(256 pages, $24.95)

By Michael M. Epstein

Nancy Grace would probably be the first to tell you that she is a polarizing figure. A former prosecutor turned anchor for Court TV and CNN's Headline News, Grace enjoys a reputation, at least among cable news junkies, as a passionate—some would say self-righteous—advocate for victims' rights. In *Objection!*, Grace is all that one would expect her to be—dramatic, angry, glib, and mean—but, unfortunately, as a polemic about justice in America, *Objection!* will not sustain the reader's interest for long. Simply put, it is not a page-turner. Almost from the beginning, it is unclear what kind of book *Objection!* is supposed to be. Co-authored by Diane Clehane, but written in the voice of Grace, *Objection!*is a repetitive, unordered collection of short passages and vignettes that sometimes reads like a first-person memoir, but mostly presents itself as a jeremiad against the legal system, criminals, and, especially, defense lawyers. In addition, the tone of the book borders on the condescending, assuming that the reader knows absolutely nothing about trials, high-profile cases, and celebrity attorneys. One wonders, who is the intended reader for this volume?

The best thing I can say about this volume is that, as a memoir, Grace's recollections of her experience as a victim turned prosecutor in Georgia can, on occasion, be interesting to read. I was intrigued by her recall of life as an Atlanta assistant district attorney, dealing with trial strategy, botched jury selections, and the importance of image—for both defendant and



victim—in the courtroom. In one vignette, for example, she describes how she was able to obtain a conviction in a bank robbery case after learning that one of the jurors in the case had previously been convicted of the same offense. Grace remembers the incident as a mistake that she made right; not by seeking a mistrial, but by tailoring her argument to the ex-con juror's expectations. As she describes it, she was able to convince the jury, including the ex-con, that the defendant was so incompetent as a bank robber that he deserved to be caught—and convicted.

But with few exceptions, even her interesting recollections leave the reader wanting. This is partly because the prose is flat, written in a banal, anecdotal style that assumes a reader knows little or nothing about crime or the courtroom. Absent is the color of a Dominick Dunne chronicle or the authoritative eloquence of a Jeffrey Toobin analysis. Moreover, as fleeting as the interesting recollections are, many of those memories are marred by descriptions that are too vague or fragmentary. As storytellers, Grace and Clehane provide their readers with little more than snapshots from cases. Rarely are defendants or opposing lawyers identified; nor are background, facts and arguments of cases presented in more than a cursory fashion. This is especially true with respect to the one story that one suspects many of Grace's fans would be most interested in reading about: the tragic story of the murder of her fiancé. While one learns that his name was Keith—she dedicates the book to him—the reader is told precious little about the man, the crime or their lives together before the tragedy. And what few details she does share—again as snapshots inserted at different points in the book—seem incomplete and confusing. Grace, at one point, says that her fiancé was murdered for $35; later she makes reference to his blood-spattered car. What's missing is a clear chronology of what precisely happened. Was it a mugging gone wrong? A carjacking?

While one can understand that someone affected by a horrible crime, as she was, may not want to relive the pain, the story of Keith is pivotal not only as a watershed moment in her life—it led her to law school and the D.A.'s office—but also as a touchstone for her professional opinions on America's criminal-justice system. Indeed, the authors repeatedly use the story of Keith both to justify the stridency of Grace's worldview and to emphasize her empathy for crime victims. Grace herself acknowledges that her critics accuse her of "wearing his death 'like a badge'" in the final pages of the book, but she dismisses the accusation as hurtful *ad hominem* that distracts from the substantive points she seeks to make. If that is, in fact, the case, then why does the book pepper its discussion of criminal justice issues—from witness handling to the death penalty—with personal references to Keith's tragedy?

The authors, in large part, use Grace's personal recollections as a bridge to a screed against defendant's rights, journalists and American justice. Grace, for example, will make brief mention of an encounter with Scott Peterson defender Mark Geragos or with a Simpson juror, and then use

REVIEW AND COMMENT

that anecdote to make the case that the attorney ethics need to be revised and our jury system reformed. The problem here is that, with the exception of some studies on the death penalty at the end of the book, the authors do not offer the type of sophisticated analysis of the issues that one might expect of a purported expert in victim's rights. As a result, what purports to be an explanation of the criminal justice system reads like an unstructured rant in which she offers anecdotes to support her passionate views without engaging the complexities of the issues and without historical context. Grace, for example, claims that, while she supports the U.S. Constitution, she believes that defense lawyers and judges must act to ensure that the "guilty" do not go free. But who determines guilt in the American criminal justice? And why is it that the Constitution places the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt squarely on the shoulders of the state? Grace talks briefly about reasonable doubt and then dismisses it, apparently failing to see that the power of defense attorneys in our system is a necessary evil if society wants to make sure that the state does not use its greater power—including its power to incarcerate or execute—against an innocent person.

Grace does not care about the wrongly accused as much as she cares about the victims with whom she identifies.

The truth is, Grace does not care about the wrongly accused as much as she cares about the victims with whom she identifies. While the book is quick to exploit the tragedies of murdered children, rape survivors and posthumous celebrity victims like Nicole Simpson and Laci Peterson, nowhere does the book similarly engage the histories of the wrongly accused whose lives were damaged or ruined by the state, people like purported Olympic bomber Richard Jewell, purported intern killer Gary Condit, or any number of the convicted felons released from long prison terms as a result of exonerating DNA analysis or prosecutorial wrongdoing. That Grace was quick to proclaim the guilt of Richard Albert Ricci, a handyman wrongly jailed by police investigating the abduction of Utah teen Elizabeth Smart, leads the television anchor not to a humbling apology but to defiance. Ricci was, as she describes it, the perfect suspect, and exhibited behavior that should have landed him back in jail.

This defiance, even in the face of an admitted error in judgment, is what makes Nancy Grace's zeal for victims seem more like self-righteousness to her critics. One gets the sense that Grace wants to live in a *Perry Mason* world where justice always leads to a knowable truth and defense attorneys work alongside ethical prosecutors to assure that the real culprit is revealed. Unfortunately, the reality of justice is never so simple. Justice, in America, is less a function of truth than it is about power—the power of the state to use its resources to prosecute a case, the power of the accused to hire expert defense lawyers, and the power of the

REVIEW AND COMMENT

media to both reflect and shape public opinion. As a former prosecutor turned television personality, Nancy Grace should know this better than most. That she is apparently unable or unwilling to engage this fundamental truth about justice makes *Objection!*, in the opinion of this reader, objectionable.

Michael M. Epstein is Professor of Law at Southwestern Law School in Los Angeles. A media law scholar who also writes about images of lawyers in media, Dr. Epstein is associated with the Donald E. Biederman Entertainment and Media Law Institute at Southwestern and is a past chair of the Section on Law and Humanities at the Association of American Law Schools.

Over the Edge: How the Pursuit of Youth by Marketers and the Media has Changed American Culture

By Leo Bogart

Ivan R. Dee, Chicago
(323 pages, $27.50)

Raising Consumers: Children and the American Mass Market in the Early Twentieth Century

By Lisa Jacobson

Columbia University Press, New York
(320 pages, $37.00)

By Nicholas Sammond

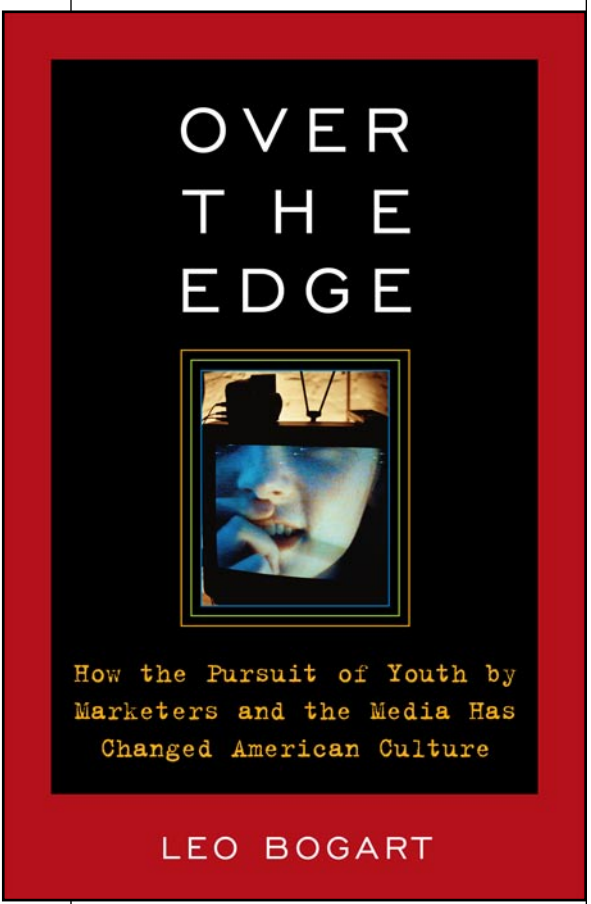
Rare it is that the disposition of a child changes the future of a nation, its boundaries, its relations with other nations (perhaps the Dauphin or the current leader of the United States might mark an exception). Adults are the actors on the world stage; children are their audience. That is what makes it hard to capture the import of children's history and social presence. Yet there is a thread that runs through the record of the grownup world, one that points to the importance of children:

REVIEW AND COMMENT

the gnawing fear that this diminutive audience is watching a bit too closely, is gleaning the worst of our adult world and storing it away for future use. Time-worn jeremiads bewailing the effects of media on children—from poetry, to plays, to books, to video games—stretches from classical Greece to Imperial Rome to Elizabethan England, into the Bush era.

In *Over the Edge: How the Pursuit of Youth by Marketers and the Media has Changed American Culture*, Leo Bogart continues the eternal refrain bewailing media effects on children. Yet he does manage to add a twist to that old dirge: it is the "pursuit of youth" by marketers and media execs that is dragging American culture and society into a quagmire of depravity and postmodern relativism. In series of ten chapters with titles like "The Pursuit of Youth," "The Wisdom of Wooing Young Consumers," and "Protecting the Innocent," Bogart plays at theme and variation, larding his text with loosely related statistics and quotes from sociologists, psychologists and members of the media themselves, explaining how American youth have been corrupted in the twentieth century, how marketing firms have both taken advantage of the moral decline brought on by commercial culture, and how they have amplified its negative effects.

Yet those marketers are not alone in their assault on an essential American culture. In chapter two, "The Mutability of Mores," Bogart charts the multiple factors in the decline of that culture, beginning with "…the arrival of millions of predominantly non-European immigrants…" in U.S. cities following World War II, continuing with "…the invention of the new contraceptive pill…" and the resulting increase in women's sexual freedom, as well as the growth in single-parent households and those led by homosexual couples in the 1960s and 70s. All of these developments (that is, the empowerment of those other than straight, white, middle-class men) Bogart links to a "decline in civility"



REVIEW AND COMMENT

that provides a chink in the armor of civilization through which hordes of immoral marketers have crept. Thus, we should not be surprised that a few pages later, he speaks warmly of the burka as a shield of female modesty and a regulator of public mores, that later he refers to Ellen DeGeneres as "a lesbian both on-screen and off" (oh, dear), or that he uncritically cites the highly questionable Payne Fund studies of the 1930s and the roundly discredited work of 1950s anti-vice crusader Frederick Wertham in laying his case. Although Bogart suggests that this creeping cultural decay is encouraged by a "postmodern doctrine" which eschews truth and objectivity in favor of a wacky notion that peoples of different cultures have values worth examining, what he really seems to object to is modernity itself. And although he suggests that it is postmodernists who have abandoned truth and objectivity, his rather casual borrowing from histories he doesn't seem to know well—such as those of media censorship or marketing itself—and his use of loosely correlated statistics would suggest that perhaps he seek a little closer to home for the roots of creeping relativism.

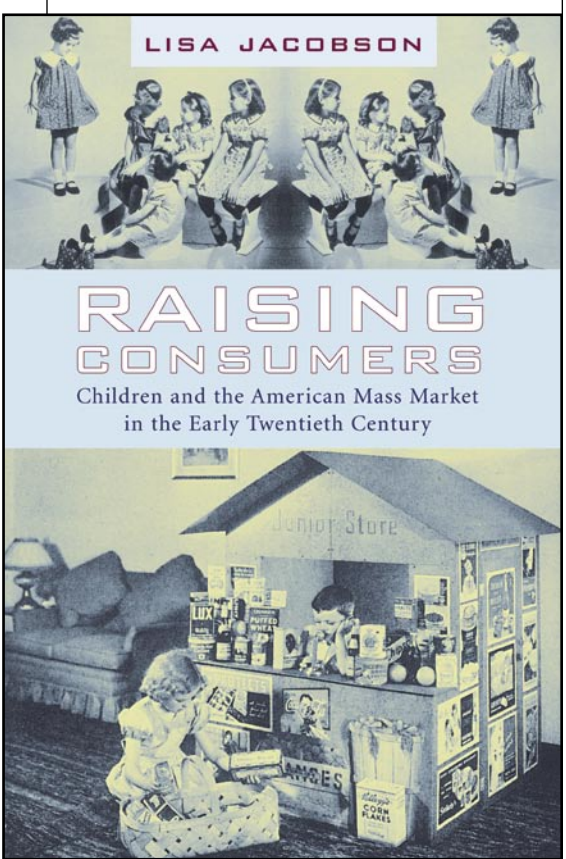
Does this mean that the book is of little value? Hardly. Bogart wants to write a moral tract—perhaps something along the lines of John Locke's "Some Thoughts Concerning the Education of Children." Unfortunately, he attempts to prove the objective truth of his position, and the bursts of agglomerated statistics with which he peppers his jeremiad perfectly illustrate the Statistics 101 dictum that correlation does not equal causation. For example, on page 37, he tells us that in "a survey of 274 directors of university counseling centers in 2001, over 80 percent reported an increase over the preceding five years in the number of students with severe psychic disorders." Later he states that a "nationwide survey of twelve thousand junior and senior high school students found that 38 percent of blacks, 36 percent of Hispanics, and 22 percent of non-Hispanic whites said that they had carried or used a weapon or had been involved in a weapons-related incident within the last year." Along with other figures, this data is meant to prove that children and youth today are less psychologically stable, less morally grounded, and more violent than those of previous generations. This weak correlation later links to equally rigorous analysis to demonstrate that this tear in the moral fabric is the result of media consumption. The presence of actual numbers on the page is meant to add weight to Bogart's argument, when unfortunately it makes what might be a valid moral claim—that we should question the right of private entities to dictate public social relations—a poorly substantiated rant. There is room for a moral tract on the shortcomings of contemporary society, a well-argued claim for the deleterious effects of the unthinking use of certain social categories, or for a social life outside of consumption. (Mortimer Adler, for instance, did this quite nicely in the 1930s.) Cobbling together individually interesting bits of data to make that argument appear socially scientific, thus factual, ultimately undermines those claims.

Still, what is useful about *Over the*

REVIEW AND COMMENT

Edge is its discussion of "youth" by marketers, et al. What is less useful is hitching that potentially valuable conversation to a moral denunciation of values Bogart doesn't like. Either project is worthwhile, but they are poor partners. The larger political consequences of a market construction of youth—which someone like Thomas Frank comes closer to articulating in his *Conquest of Cool*—are lost in the bluster and noise. What Bogart denies is the thornier issue of how youth are empowered or disempowered by consumption generally and media consumption more specifically…or how other social and demographic groups are shaped and limited through a focus on youth. (If there were nothing of value in commercial culture, why would youth be so enamored of it? Do we really think so little of our children?) Instead, he opts for grand social criticism, leaving his reader to decide whether we really are all going to hell in a handbasket… or a virtual shopping cart.

If Leo Bogart does his topic a disservice by treating social criticism as sociological inquiry, in *Raising Consumers: Children and the American Mass Market in the Early Twentieth Century*, Lisa Jacobson offers the corrective of a carefully researched cultural history of consumption. There are challenges in writing about consumer culture. Many authors cannot resist the urge to translate an almost puritan distaste for the commercial into an argument for a kinder or gentler capitalism (see above). Others err in the opposite direction and celebrate the shiny surfaces of consumer culture as roads to the unalloyed empowerment of the oppressed, paying little attention to the unequal flows of power that underpin that play. To land in the middle, to enter into a more nuanced reading of a cultural landscape, one that clearly stakes out a viable critical position, takes careful and patient research and an eye for contradiction. For the most part, Jacobson's history of the role of children in an emerging and robust consumer culture admirably manages



this balance. If anything, it errs on the side of caution, providing no more aggressive thesis than that the rise of consumer culture in the early twentieth century permitted children (particularly adolescents) a more meaningful role in family life, and contributed to the democratizing of the domestic sphere.

Jacobson organizes her project both chronologically and by consumer phenomenon, making a second, implicit argument that children were pivotal to a relatively fluid evolution of marketing and consumption as a cultural phenomenon. Beginning from the premise that a youth culture built around consumption significantly predates the usual touchstone point of the introduction of commercial television in the postwar period, she begins her survey at the beginning of the 20th century, focusing first on faltering attempts to understand and produce a youth market, and examining magazines as an important precursor to radio as an advertising source. In successive chapters, she examines the "thrift education" (using practices of saving to encourage buying), how marketers imagined boy consumers in the early twentieth century (and how they used them to gain a foothold in the home), peer-consciousness in girls of the 1920s and 30s and how advertisers spoke to (and through) girls' concerns, the rise of parental anxiety and playrooms, and, finally, the use of radio clubs to organize children as consumers in the 1930s and 40s.

The strength of this project (and to a certain extent its limitation) is Jacobson's focus on a limited number of archival sources. Drawing primarily on the extensive N.W. Ayer and Warshaw collections at the Smithsonian Institution, and on the J. Walter Thompson DMB&B archives at Duke University, she engages in a close reading of print advertising and radio campaigns to support the analysis of larger social and cultural moments in the periods she examines. This is a strength for the obvious reason that it grounds her claims in a consistent body of historical material and acts as a touchstone against which she tests her claims. It is a (debatable) weakness in that she hesitates to make larger claims that might require data from more varied sources.

The missteps the book makes are few, and center around reasonably arguable interpretations of the historical record. Jacobson places the rise of psychoanalytic discourse in child-rearing in the late 1920s and 1930s, and links it to a more scientific (or at least scientistic) psychological approach to reading the consumer mind. While it is certainly true that there was a flurry of popular interest in Freudian theory in the 1920s, some of which translated into marketing theory (witness the rise of Freud's nephew, Edward Bernays in the world of public relations), sustained interest in the theory was limited to a smaller intellectual class, was treated as a humorous oddity by many, and only began to be widely adopted in the child-rearing community in the late 1930s and 40s. In spite of the curiosity over Freud, behaviorist John B. Watson's *Psychological Care of Infant and Child* (1928) was widely acclaimed, and Freudian approaches to child-rearing were only gradually seen as a corrective

to the excesses of behaviorist-inspired discipline. Only after World War II, and the rise of Benjamin Spock in particular, were these approaches more fully integrated into mainstream discourse—and with that integration there then arose anxieties about the susceptibility of children to commercial applications of the psychoanalytic. This is not to say that Freudian theory did not have its effect on marketing to children and youth. Rather, it is to say that the extensive adoption of Freudian regimes was limited for a time by a limited popular reception.

Similarly, Jacobson's claims for the democratizing influence of consumer culture in the home must be read against the rise of the single-wage household following the Great Depression, and against such countervailing trends as the exclusion of women from the managerial ranks of radio soon after its establishment as a commercial medium, which Michele Hilmes has so well documented. Consumer culture didn't so much democratize the domestic sphere as it did change the balance of power between parents and children and between women and men in the home. Also, the address of marketing to men, women, and children in the early part of the 20th century helped to further sediment public/private gender divisions, empowering women and and children as economic actors in the *private* sphere, but reasserting the *public* sphere as a male domain. In the 1920s and 30s, one is just as likely to find popular discussions about the possibility of consumer culture contributing to domestic unrest as to democracy. The rhetoric of democracy in regard to child-rearing and domestic management was more a creature of WWII, when the absence of male authority in many homes created anxiety about unbridled feminine power, and about children's acquiescence to that power as a precursor to misunderstanding that their subjugation to state power was provisional rather than normal. Neither of these exceptions, however, invalidate Jacobson's larger argument that consumer culture shifted relations of power in the household and changed understandings of the child as a social being. Indeed, her meticulous approach to the material and desire not to over-read it may have kept her from addressing these broader issues.

This hesitation is a small price to pay for a carefully researched and well-argued discussion of the role of youth in the emergence of consumer culture. It will be a welcome addition to a body of work that includes Jackson Lears, Strasser, McGovern and Judt, and more recently the excellent work of Daniel Cook. More reasoned and based in solid empirical research than Bogart's cry in the wilderness, Jacobson allows her readers to reflect on the place of consumer culture in our daily lives, and then perhaps to make informed decisions about whether to be satisfied with it.

Nicholas Sammond is an Assistant Professor of Cinema Studies at the University of Toronto. He is the author of *Babes in Tomorrowland: Walt Disney and the Making of the American Child, 1930-1960* (Duke University Press, 2005) and the editor of *Steel Chair to the Head: The Pleasure and Pain of Professional Wrestling* (Duke University Press, 2005).

REVIEW AND COMMENT

COMCASTed: How Ralph and Brian Roberts Took Over America's TV, One Deal at a Time

By Joseph N. DiStefano

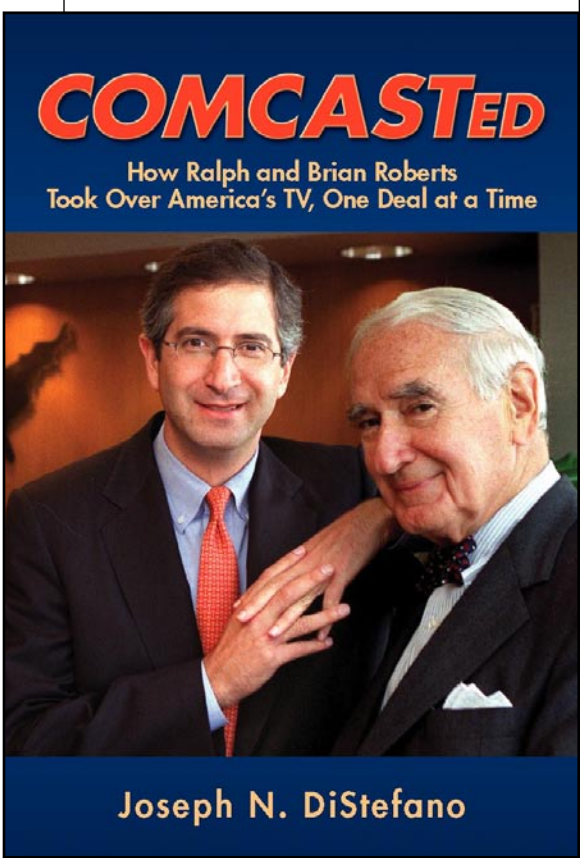
Camino Books, Philadelphia, PA
(240 pages, $24.95)

By Paul Noble

It came as a surprise to me, a former broadcast and cable TV programmer, to learn that the Roberts family had already eclipsed Charles and James Dolan, John Malone, Ted Turner, Rupert Murdoch, Michael Eisner, Sumner Redstone, Dick Parsons and Barry Diller in terms of power, prestige and control over what the nation sees and hears.

As a New York area resident for most of my life, Comcast was not an obvious factor in the mix of media behemoths. This past year, I moved to Florida, and soon learned that Comcast would be knocking at my door, gobbling up the Adelphia franchises in my adopted state. And so, when *COMCASTed: How Ralph and Brian Roberts Took Over America's TV, One Deal at a Time*, the new unauthorized biography of Comcast's founders, came my way, I approached the book with a bit of curiosity tempered by incredulity but touched with concern.

Joseph N. DiStefano, an award-winning business reporter for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, is perfectly situated to look into the Comcast story; he and Comcast have their roots in Philly, and he's been covering the company for many years. Based on this book, you'd have to say that he is not a fan of big business --- really big business. He points out early on that one of Ralph Roberts' first employees, Daniel Aaron, told him that "cable is the greatest thing since stealing." *COMCASTed* bears out this theory, and carefully tells the history of the company and the extremely clever, somewhat and sometimes underhanded, and invariably successful ways in which the Robertses — father and son — have been able to



REVIEW AND COMMENT

keep the fees high, the service low, and the profits astronomical. Television is only one of the services on which Comcast's future lies; it is the possibility of monopolistic distribution of internet access and other forms of digital media that is frightening DiStefano, and, obviously, the rest of us.

A helpful chronology of Comcast's achievements precedes the main story, and an appendix of footnotes follows the text. Incredibly, and chintzily, there is no index of any kind, a symptom of the kind of cost-cutting of which the author might say the Robertses would heartily approve!

We are all complicit in the Roberts family's success, says DiStefano, "thanks….to American television viewers' endless willingness to pay ever higher prices to watch the always flickering screen, instead of going out to make something grand of their own lives." He shows how *our* failure allows Comcast "the deep vein of opportunism; the willingness to look past a range of evils in pursuit of a deal or an advantage; and the keen ability to represent themselves as whatever the customer, regular, investor, or politician who could help them needs to see."

Ralph Roberts, the son of Russian immigrants, sought businesses in which there was little or no competition. According to DiStefano, from Muzak to master antennas, from sports team franchises to shopping-at-home to satellite pornography, the Robertses searched out and exploited the opportunities. The lucrative cable franchise in Philadelphia, the development of QVC, their acquisitions of TCI and ATT Broadband, the control of sports teams (and TV rights and venues) to the hockey and basketball teams Flyers and 76ers, the failed attempt to take over the Walt Disney Company, and the successful partnering with Time Warner for millions of cable homes soon to be divested by Adelphia Communications, are some of the highlights of Comcast's march forward, trampling over the competition and raising prices for consumers.

Along the way, we're treated to DiStefano's insights into turning points and decisions which have made the Robertses and the others in the business of communications successful in their control of what used to be called "the airwaves." For example:

1 For many years cable pioneers didn't pay for programming. They just appropriated signals and sent them into your home.

2 President Reagan signed a law in 1984 taking the power to set cable rates from municipalities and vesting it in the Federal Communications Commission. Rather than the federal government helping to keep rates low, increases became the norm.

3 It was the growth of cable which took sports telecasting away from broadcast, socking it to sports fans everywhere, especially in markets like Philadelphia and New York, where companies like Comcast and Cablevision controlled rights to major teams as well as their venues.

4 Since "cable companies, unlike phone systems and highways, were

REVIEW AND COMMENT

exempt from the 'common carrier' designation that forced other utilities to serve any potential customer," the cable companies now control the gates to the Internet. And that's why broadband access is so expensive.

DiStefano's history is very helpful. However, I found that some of his discussion about the ways in which business deals and decisions were consummated was incomplete for a business novice.

Also, DiStefano's negative analysis allows little room for the visionary entrepreneur, the not-necessarily benevolent media mogul, the risk-taking (and therefore non-risk-sharing) oligarch. Whatever one may wish to say about Ted Turner's personal quirks, Rupert Murdoch's coarse exploitation methods or Sumner Redstone's aggressiveness, for example, one must see that our television and cable diet is probably richer, more varied and far more exciting than if the descendants of the Big Three (ABC, CBS, NBC) had been the only ones "running the show" these past two decades.

The most curious aspect of the book is the author's heavy-handed treatment of the Roberts family's religious and cultural roots. Nowhere in the book do we have such designations applied to Ted Turner, Charles Dolan, John Malone, Richard Parsons, John Kluge, Rupert Murdoch, Barry Diller or any of the other bigger-than-life figures in the industry who are important players in the story DiStefano tells. But we have at least 47 references to the Jewishness of Ralph Roberts and his family and associates.

"To build his team Ralph depended on cold hiring calculations as well as on ties of marriage, blood, and the common life experience of men he chose early to follow and guide him. Brian has assembled his own successor team; it is a more diverse group drawn not from the *ambitious* (my italics) Jewish immigrant ghetto of his father's time….." the author tells us on page 129. Six pages later: "Like Ralph Roberts a generation before him, (Mayor) Ed Rendell was an *ambitious* (my italics) Jewish New Yorker who came to Philadelphia…." Then, on page 140, (Governor) Milton Jerrold Shapp had staffed his seminal cable equipment and finance company from the ranks of the *ambitious* (my italics) young socialists who had followed President Roosevelt's left-wing Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace…" Am I being touchy? Is the author using "ambitious" negatively or positively? When it's attached to "Jewish" or "socialist," is there a subversive meaning?

In the year 2005, is stereotyping of this sort bad manners as well as politically incorrect? Despite the excellent research this book contains, there's an undercurrent here that is quite disturbing. I really hadn't expected to read *The Merchants of Philadelphia*.

Paul Noble recently retired as vice-president, film acquisitions and scheduling, Lifetime Television. He is a Trustee of the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences.

REVIEW AND COMMENT

South Park Conservatives

By Brian C. Anderson

Regnery Publishing Inc.
(191 pages, $24.95)

Everything Bad Is Good For You

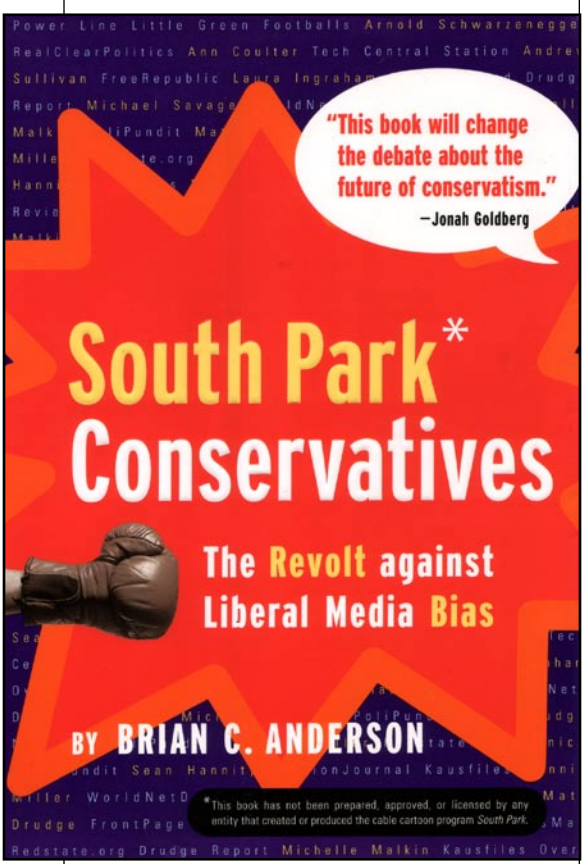
By Steven Johnson

Riverhead Books
(Published by the Penguin Group)
(238 pages; $23.95)

By Earl Pomerantz

Good news sells, and these books, covering similar terrain though with vastly differing agendas, are exploding with it. The difference is that *South Park Conservatives* is a right-wing pep rally in hardcover, while *Everything Bad Is Good For You* is a skillfully argued affirmation that our much-maligned American culture is actually making us smarter. The second book is better.

Should you happen to find yourself at a Republican fundraiser, you may very well enjoy some institutional catering, author Brian C. Anderson as "our special Guest Speaker" and get *South Park Conservatives* to take home. That's what this book essentially is, a conservative party favor, proclaiming that the wicked "mainstream media" has lost its stranglehold on the American consciousness and now the truth can finally be heard. In his introduction alone, three victories are jubilantly declared: the banishing of "The Reagans" miniseries from CBS, the Swift Boat Veterans campaign against John Kerry and the discrediting of the memo attacking the President's National Guard record. To my reading, this plants conservatives firmly on the side of censorship, the uncritical acceptance of hearsay evidence, and deflection to the memo and away from its contents. Of course, that's just my interpretation. This is Anderson's book



REVIEW AND COMMENT

and he can brag about anything he wants.

So what have we got? A book-length report chronicling how conservative talk radio, Internet blogs, the Fox Network, right-wing publishing and increasingly organized Republicans on campus have busted the mainstream media monopoly on the dissemination of news and information and given birth to a broadened range of political expression. So far, so good. A timely story and an unquestionably important one. But then comes the cheerleading: "But before we get to the exciting story of how the new media are overthrowing this old regime, we need to understand its most pernicious effects…" Three words here immediately jump out: "exciting", "overthrowing" and "pernicious." This is not the language of balance and objectivity. Anderson only gushes to one side, leaving his book virtually unreadable to anyone else.

There's a lot of talk about the truth and the liberal media's preventing us from hearing it. "We simply don't get the truth on the abortion issue from the liberal media," head of the Media Research Center's Brent Bozell is quoted as complaining. Which gets me wondering. "The truth about abortion." What exactly is that? Is it that abortion is a sad and painful experience, but criminalization would only make a bad situation worse? That can't be it. That truth is already out. Is it that abortion has been the law of the land since 1973? No, that truth is out too. What I must assume Anderson's referring to is the truth in the survey he cites conducted by The Center for the Advancement of Women demonstrating that "51 percent of women now do not support abortion at all or only in the cases of incest or rape." Okay, fine. Of course, it would enhance the credibility of that truth if Anderson had explained who the Center for the Advancement of Women was, who the women were they surveyed, and how the group broke down as to age, religion, race, financial status and other determining factors. Unfortunately, Anderson neglects to clarify these issues, which, I must say, leaves me skeptical of the whole report.

A major hero in the book is Rush Limbaugh. And why not? Limbaugh got the ball rolling, popularizing partisan conservatism on the AM dial, and ushering in a blabfest explosion wherein "conservatives dominate talk radio to an overwhelming, remarkable degree." Though conceding that Rush's style can be "rude" and his personal life "spotty," Anderson praises Limbaugh for his "unceasing reasoned argument." His selected example? "What I am…is anti-liberal. Liberalism is a scourge. It destroys the human spirit. It destroys prosperity. It assigns sameness to everybody. And wherever I find it, I oppose it." I may be prejudiced, but from an "unceasing reasoned argument" perspective, he doesn't seem to be having his finest day. On the other hand, if Limbaugh had provided a better example of "unceasing reasoned argument," wouldn't Anderson have chosen to include that one instead?

Then there's Fox. You know Fox – the national news organization which trumpets one thing in its ubiquitous slogan, then practices pretty much the opposite? "Sure, the anchor or the host is often a conservative, but it's

REVIEW AND COMMENT

clear he is striving to tell the truth," Anderson reports. Fair enough. But the foundation of Anderson's argument denies an equal benefit of the doubt to the other side. Apparently, newspeople trying to be objective can't be, but those who aren't trying can. That's possible, I suppose. Though logic suggests maybe not.

Anderson's title refers to the hilarious animated series on Comedy Central which he offers as a prime example of anti-liberal backlash, its targets including: "hate-crime laws, and sexual harassment policies, liberal celebrities, abortion-rights extremists, and other shibboleths of the Left." First, let us agree that pomposity aligns itself with no single political party. There's plenty of hot air to go around. Second, any cursory viewing of *South Park* would immediately demonstrate that its creators, Stone and Parker, direct their blowhard-puncturing irreverence at targets left and right, using crude language and shots at organized religion ("Mr. Hankie, the Christmas Poo?") that would have Evangelicals praying desperately for their immortal souls. (Note: Recently, conservatives have been lobbying for legislation to censor cable shows as regards to language and content. That would be an ironic turn of events, don't you think? Conservatives targeting a show this book made its title-exploiting centerpiece?)

A credible accounting of the right-wing ascendance would be a useful and illuminating addition to the advancing story of modern media. But delivering that would require an author and an agenda that truly are fair and balanced.

One final question. At last count, Republicans control every branch of American government – the Presidency, both houses of Congress and arguably the Supreme Court (remember "Bush versus Gore"?). If the "mainstream media" have had so little effect on the conservative surge to dominance, what exactly is the problem?

Legitimizing his credentials as a gaming nerd from Page 1, Steven Johnson offers in his highly readable *Everything Bad Is Good For You* a rebuttal to the charge that he's throwing his life away. When he was ten, Johnson concocted some simulated, statistics-driven, dice-rolling, baseball-related enterprise and spent way too much time immersed in the minutiae of his self-created obsession. Therefrom evolves the theory for his book, colorfully summarized by what Johnson labels the Sleeper Curve. A concept lifted from the Woody Allen comedy "Sleeper," the Sleeper Curve posits that in the future, things once believed to be bad for you will turn out to be the opposite. What I call Johnson's spending "way too much time immersed in the minutiae of his self-created obsession…" Johnson files under "Old School" thinking, claiming that, on the contrary, he was learning many valuable skills and lessons, ergo the Sleeper Curve and the title *Everything Bad Is Good For You.*

Johnson quotes the latest Dr. Spock book as saying, "(M)ost computer games are a colossal waste of time." Though it concedes that game playing enhances eye-hand coordination, the price for these heightened reflexes

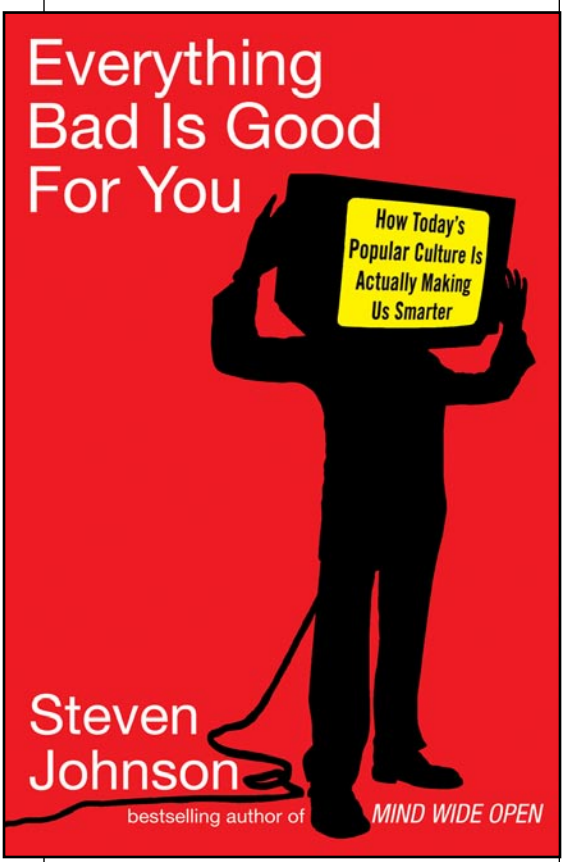
REVIEW AND COMMENT

is that gameplayers become anti-social, potentially violent and stupid. Johnson's response is that games (and the Internet and television) are being judged by old and irrelevant standards. "I believe that the Sleeper Curve is the single most important new force altering the mental development of young people today, and I believe it is largely a force for good: enhancing our cognitive faculties, not dumbing them down." Activities others see as promoting the infantilization of society Johnson believes are "exercising our minds in powerful new ways." We just have to evaluate them in an appropriate – meaning more positive – manner.

The old standard, Johnson argues, favors "the tyranny of the morality play" where "the underlying assumption is that entertainment improves us when it carries a healthy message." That's where the problem lies. "Judged by that morality play standard, the story of popular culture…is the story of steady decline…" From a Gamer's perspective, this is a losing strategy. So how do you win? You change the standard. Which is what Johnson basically does.

He talks about the positive consequences of game playing. He focuses on how playing requires patience, persistence and excruciatingly deferred gratification. He emphasizes the games' problem-solving requirements, filling in the gaps, testing the assumptions. "(G)ames force you to decide, to choose, to prioritize", exercising what Johnson calls the talents of "probing and telescoping" in search of the answer. "When gamers interact with these environments, they are learning the basic procedure of the scientific method." And so, video games are actually making you smarter. (I may be in over my head here, but couldn't similar claims be made for "Monopoly" and "Clue"?)

But wait, there's more good news. Not only does game playing make you smarter, guess what? So does television. Can you believe it? "For someone loosely following the debate over the medium's cultural impact, the idea television is actually improving our minds will sound like apostasy." Johnson then proceeds to prove that



REVIEW AND COMMENT

TV watching enhances our thinking power. Where was he when my mother was yelling "Will you turn that damn thing off!"

Using a series of impressive-looking charts, Johnson demonstrates that shows like **ER** and *The West Wing* are considerably more contentually subtle and narratively complex than T.V. shows of the past like Dragnet and *Starsky and Hutch.* "(P)art of the pleasure in these modern television narratives comes from the cognitive labor you're forced to do filling in the details." Dealing with a multiplicity of storylines and unclear information forces today's TV watcher into a viewing mode Johnson calls "sit-forward" rather than the traditional "lean-back", or doze off.

And it's not just the superior shows that are teaching us things. Borrowing techniques from video games, reality shows engage us in the "intellectual labor of probing the systems rules for weak spots and opportunities." Evaluating the hidden motives of the contestants also helps sharpen our emotional IQ. "'Playing' a reality show requires you to both adapt to an ever-changing rulebook, and scheme your way through a minefield of personal relationships." Comparing *Joe Millionaire* with yesteryear's *Battle of the Network Stars*, Johnson offers proof of the ultimate test of the Sleeper Curve theory: "(E)ven the crap has improved."

The cherry on this good-news sundae is served up in a study showing that the American people are smarter now that we've ever been. Citing a study by philosopher and longtime civil-rights advocate James Flynn, Johnson reports that "in forty-six years, the American people have gained 13.8 IQ points on average." That's not just brainiacs, it's all of us. How did that happen? It can't be the schools. We know how terrible they are. Could our rising intelligence stem from the narrative complexity and problem-solving challenges provided by the current media? Impossible. Everyone knows the media's making us dumber.

Or are they?

My experience creating television shows leads to one point on which I respectfully disagree. Johnson's reporting that "syndication and DVD sales offer great financial reward to creators who generate titles complex enough to remain interesting through repeat encounters" points to the implication that writers deliberately complexify their material to generate big-buck bonanzas down the line. In my experience, thoughts of this nature never come to mind. When you're creating a new television show, you're not thinking about the down-the-road possibilities of syndication and DVD's. You're just trying to get the thing on, and hope that the viewing public responds. True, subtlety and narrative complexity are no longer avoided, but they can't insure a hit show. And no hit show, no DVD.

Johnson's theory also offers no explanation for the multi-decade longevity of the uni-layered genius of *I Love Lucy, The Andy Griffith Show, The Dick Van Dyke Show,* not to mention Chaplin, Keaton and Laurel and Hardy. Maybe it's not narrative complexity that breeds entertainment longevity but simply quality.

REVIEW AND COMMENT

In the end, it isn't a question of either/or. Responding to the lacerating critique of modern culture, Johnson's book argues for nudging aside the storyteller's perspective for that of the Gamer's, though he's hardly an extremist. Feeling his perspective has been haughtily dismissed, Johnson's appeal requests reconsideration, one his book strongly demonstrates it deserves. Still, for my money, to investigate more deeply, to understand more fully, to get the richest and truest sense of who we are and how we behave, the still most reliable path is the one beginning with six very special words: Let me tell you a story.

A frequent contributor to *Television Quarterly,* Earl Pomerantz was executive producer of *The Cosby Show*. He is a veteran television comedy writer whose credits include *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *Cheers*. He has won two Emmy awards, a Writers' Guild award, a Humanitas Prize and a Cable Ace award.

What Women Watched: Daytime Television in the 1950s

By Marsha F. Cassidy

University of Texas Press
(276 pages, $21.95 paperback)

By Mary Ann Watson

American women of the 1950s have been the subject of countless cultural studies and historical inquiries—all confirming that their lives were far more complex and nuanced than conventional wisdom would have us believe. Marsha Cassidy brings a fascinating new body of evidence to the table with *What Women Watched: Daytime Television in the 1950s.*

In the decade before soap operas began to dominate TV's schedule on weekday afternoons, the networks experimented with daytime formats, production techniques and on-air personalities. Cassidy's analysis of the industry's quest to meld TV viewing into the workaday routine of the average housewife is a *tour de force* of archival research. Each case study is far more than a description of what was seen on the screen. Primary source documents, such as memos between network executives, as well as oral histories conducted by the author, provide a rich context rather than a mere backdrop.

The first program Cassidy chronicles in depth is *The Kate Smith Hour,* which aired on NBC from 1950-1954. Smith's virtuoso radio performances of "God Bless America"—a song she

REVIEW AND COMMENT

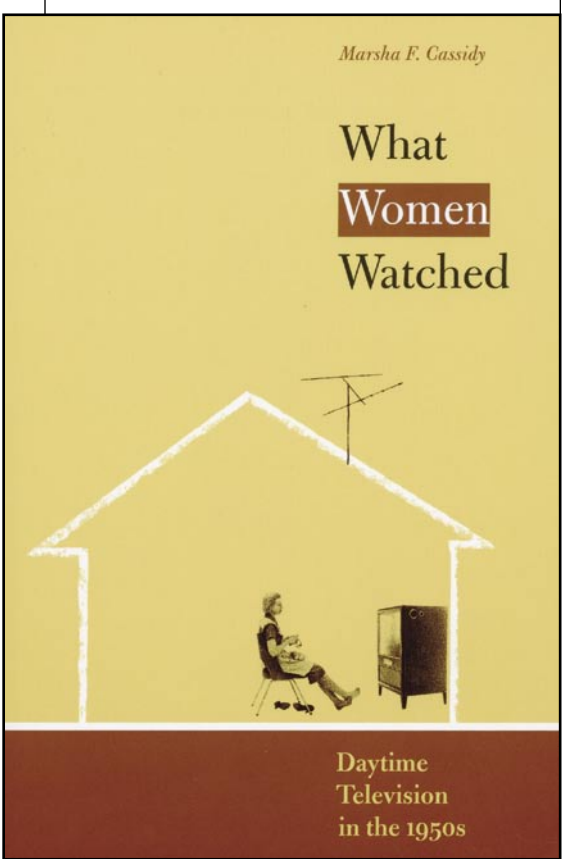
had commissioned Irving Berlin to write for her—had a profound impact on patriotism during World War II and drove the sale of war bonds to spectacular heights. Smith would always be linked to her impassioned support of the Allied cause, which became an increasing impediment as postwar women grew more interested in a modern lifestyle.

The heavyweight icon was more of a nostalgic figure than a contemporary TV star. A sturdy look was not the goal of 1950s fashions. The trend was slim lines and pinched-waists—inspired by Christian Dior's vision of women as delicate flowers. The production values of *The Kate Smith Hour* were also out of step with the times. Cassidy details the proscenium staging conventions that fought the medium's inherent intimacy, including static long shots and virtually no visual acknowledgment of the live studio audience.

Another problem that had nothing to do with her physique was Kate Smith's reluctance to endorse sponsors' products on her program. The singer's dear friend and manager Ted Collins did not want Smith's stature as an artist diminished by turning her into a saleswoman. When advertisers, such as Jergens hand lotion, insisted on personal testimonials, they found that Smith "lacked enthusiasm right through." The mission of daytime television in the 1950s was to push product—and Kate wasn't playing ball like a good scout.

In the following chapter, Cassidy covers three "Charm Boys" who were proud to be pitchmen to the ladies at home. She describes Garry Moore, Arthur Godfrey and Art Linkletter as "charismatic male stars…whose assertive but tone-down masculinity secured a defining brand of male dominance in the daytime world." They weren't artists, just pleasant guys with the gift of gab and an understanding of the close-up nature of the medium. The author explains how much impact a well-timed "grin, or glance, or wink at the camera" had on viewers.

The sprightly, bow-tied host of *The Garry Moore Show* believed housewives used television as a "sop for loneliness" in the daytime hours. His variety



program created a community for female fans—one in which they felt admired and appreciated. "I reject the notion that housewives are stupid because they listen to daytime shows," Moore told *Time* magazine in 1953. His spirited and solicitous interactions with the studio audience were key to his rapport with the audience at home. He *wanted* to hear what they had to say. In addition to comedy sketches, musical performances, and weekly exotic animal segments, Moore conducted celebrity interviews—including visits from Frank Lloyd Wright, Carl Sandburg and Eleanor Roosevelt.

Arthur Godfrey Time also had a live studio audience made up primarily of women, but they had little role in the proceedings. Godfrey was a more imperial host, seated on a raised platform with his troupe of performers seated below. His manner was engaging and his smile boyish, but there was never any doubt that he was running the show. Cassidy makes the fascinating observation that the controlling Godfrey functioned more as a "spousal substitute" than the indulgent Moore.

Art Linkletter's *House Party* is typically remembered for the host's sometimes hilarious, but always gentle interviews with children. The author reminds us, though, that when Linkletter and the ladies were alone, he often tickled with double entendre and mild innuendo. His athletic build, Cassidy posits, "continually affirmed his virility onscreen." Fan mail with "big red lipstick kisses" and suggestions of intimacy indicate that his fans regarded him as a "distant yet present paramour."

The lowbrow offerings of the "misery show" genre raised the hackles of critics who believed they exploited human misfortune for network profits. On *Strike It Rich,* down-on-their-luck contestants, many with physical handicaps, told their sad stories on camera. The author notes that the show "offered the studio audience and home viewers an unfettered stare at the disabled body." *Glamour Girl* was a show in which women in trying circumstances, whose looks had suffered as a result, competed for the prize of a complete makeover. The postwar premise of the series was that cosmetics and clothes changed not only appearance, but also personality and outlook on life.

In 1956, *Queen for a Day,* another melodramatic "confessional" show, took daytime TV by storm and sponsors lined up. Each day four women were selected from the studio audience to tell tear-jerking stories of life's cruelties. Tales of sick children especially tugged at the emotions of viewers. Cassidy observes, however, that host Jack Bailey, a former carnival barker, "controlled, interrupted, and reworked" the contestants' narratives of woe rather than allowing them to speak freely. The women supplied the sobs and distressed expressions as Bailey "manipulated the tenor of each story."

At the another end of the spectrum was a woman who had the freedom and talent to speak authoritatively on a wide range of subjects. *Home* with Arlene Francis was created by NBC's Sylvester "Pat" Weaver as a midday version of *Today* and *Tonight*. Its relatively short run between 1954 and 1957, though,

REVIEW AND COMMENT

relegated *Home* to a minor footnote in TV history for decades.

Cassidy makes a strong case for the series being a subject of academic interest. Her discussion of the ostensibly contradictory messages about women's roles conveyed to the viewers of *Home* is the most intriguing theorizing in the book. As the title suggested, the show was about domestic matters. An elaborate circular stage facilitated a segmented format. The daily rotation included features on cooking, beauty advice, gardening and home decorating. But there was also an emphasis on culture, history and the importance of women in public affairs. "*Home* challenged a rigid construction of the homemaker ideal," the author writes. "(The show) cast doubt on homebound femininity and projected the possibility for alternatives."

Another of Pat Weaver's mid-decade attempts to upgrade the status of daytime television was *Matinée Theater*, a daily one-hour drama. The original concept was to offer women at home stories in the legitimate theater tradition of the prime-time anthology series rather than the pedestrian approach of soap opera. Renowned producer Albert McCleery was at the helm of the "gargantuan effort."

During its three-year run, *Matinée Theater* offered 660 hours of live daily drama broadcast in color. The eclectic body of original scripts explored "human, sexual, and familial relationships" with surprising sophistication. Occasional costumed dramas, adaptations of classics such as "Much Ado about Nothing" and "Wuthering Heights," were part of the mix. The pressure from advertisers for a more populist brand of teleplay was a growing tension as the series progressed.

As the decade drew to a close, prestige drama—both in daytime and prime time—was caught in changing industry currents. The network could not justify the high cost of producing *Matinée Theater* when more cheaply produced game shows, talk shows and soap operas were earning higher ratings and kept sponsors happy. With understandable bitterness, McCleery called TV "that black marauder of the arts."

What Women Watched is a valuable addition to the study of broadcast history, demonstrating how the cultural pressures faced by postwar women could be traced through daytime TV. For the most part, Cassidy writes with clarity and cogency. There are, however, some unfortunate lapses into academic jargon that have no explanatory power. Phrases such as "in the homology of tropes" and "the aesthetic of distanciation" don't serve the analysis or the reader. This, though, is minor criticism of an impressive scholarly undertaking.

Mary Ann Watson is a professor of Electronic Media and Film Studies at Eastern Michigan University and a frequent contributor to *Television Quarterly*.

THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF TELEVISION ARTS & SCIENCES

Executive Committee

Dennis Swanson
Chairman of the Board

Peter O. Price
President & CEO

Herb Granath
1st Vice Chairman

Malachy Wienges
Treasurer

Janice Selinger
Secretary

Darryl Cohen
2nd Vice Chairman

Harold Crump
Chairman's Representative

Linda Giannecchini
Chairman's Representative

Ibra Morales
Chairman's Representative

Board of Trustees

Bill Becker
Betsy Behrens
Mary Brenneman
David Burt
Harvey Chertok
Darryl Cohen
Paul Corbin
Jeremy Desel
Jim Disch
Phillip R. Dixon
Laura Faber
Robert Fransen
Robert Gardner
Linda Giannecchini
Alison Gibson
Allen E. Hall
Bob Hammer
Jim Hollingsworth
Cherie Housley
Jamie R. Jensen
Martha C. Kattan
Wyndham R. H. Lewis
Barbara Miller-Gidaly
Evelyn Mims
Paul Noble
David Ratzlaff
Jerry Romano
Tim Ryan
Larry Seary
Janice Selinger
William Snyder
Sue Ann Staake-Wayne
Malachy Wienges
Cynthia Zeiden

National Awards Committee

David Ashbrock
Chairman
Alan Beck
Mary Alice Dwyer-Dobbin
Linda Giannecchini
Charles Jablonski
Sheila Nevins
Steve Solomon
Sue Ann Staake-Wayne
Av Westin
Malachy Wienges

National Committee Chairs

Administration
Diane Bevins
Geneva Brignolo
Teresa Vickery

Audit
Harold Crump

Development
Robert Behrens

Education
Julie Lucas

Finance
Malachy Wienges

Legal
Cory Dunham

Marketing
Frank Radice

Membership
June Colbert
Michael Hardgrove

National Awards
David Ashbrock

Program
Mary Brenneman
Steve Quant

Public Relations
Roger Lyons

Scholarship
Dr. Norman Felsenthal

Technology
Hal Protter

Television Quarterly
John Pavlik

Chapter Presidents & Administrators

Chapter	President	Exec. Director / Admin.
Boston/New England	Roger Lyons	Jill D. Jones
Chicago, Midwest	Barbara Williams	Rebekah Cowing
Cleveland	Terry D. Peterson	Marcie Price & Jackie Symons
Colorado/Heartland	Tom Dudzinski	Audrey Elling
Lone Star	Kevin Cokely	Terri Markis
Michigan	James D. Woods	Stacia Mottley
Mid-America	Michael Hardgrove	Maggie Eubanks
Mid-Atlantic	Paul Gluck	Tara Faccenda
Nashville/Midsouth	Michael J. Schoenfeld	Geneva M. Brignolo
National Capital/Chesapeake Bay	Fran Murphy	Dianne Bruno
New York	Jane Hanson	Jacqueline Gonzalez
Northwest	Scott LaPlante	Diane Bevins
Ohio Valley	Roy Flynn	Peggy Ashbrock
Pacific Southwest	Will Givens	Terry Williams
Rocky Mountain/Southwest	Donna Rossi	Patricia Emmert
San Francisco/Northern California	David Mills	Darryl Compton
Southeast	Evelyn Mims	Tomi Funderburk Lavinder
Suncoast	Robert Behrens	Karla MacDonald
Upper Midwest	Ken Stone	Teresa Vickery