



**Access.** Television stations have found one way to let the viewer on the air is to open telephones into the newsroom, as did WFTV(TV) Orlando, Fla., in examining a local issue.

### KRON-TV puts Chinese-Americans into a historical perspective

While stations across the country have slowly been coloring in one chapter of history left out of textbooks—the story of American blacks—KRON-TV penned in a chapter about another half-million people the history books have ignored: Chinese in America.

The San Francisco station's unusual six-part series was entitled *Gam Saan Haak* (or Guest from the Golden Mountain, the name given Chinese who returned to their native land after a quest for Californi gold). The series examined Chinese emigration in light of the "coolie" trade that sent Chinese labor throughout the world, and the Chinese role in the mining industry, railroads and agriculture through vintage film clips, historical pictures and on-scene shooting. But the documentary went beyond the past to look at implications for the present with two other programs on ghetto, Chinatown and modern Chinese Americans.

While the station made adept use of resources from the past to produce its film essay, it drew upon present technology to make the program available to the people whose story it told; the program was translated into Cantonese and simulcast on KRON-FM.

### An airplane, remote crew added KOCO-TV's new news

In search of a new news look, KOCO-TV Oklahoma City made the usual surface changes: a new set and a new newscast name. But it didn't stop there. The station has highlighted investigative reporting and probed everything from prison riots to breast cancer treatment. Reporters were on the scene at the Oklahoma state prison riot, feeding reports from both inside and outside the antiquated prison, coverage that culminated in a one-hour documentary that was cited by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency.

While reporting the news while it's fresh isn't a new thrust for the station, its news has been given wings by a new airborne delivery system. The station uses a private airplane to speed reporters and film crews to wherever news is breaking in the state as well as to pick up completed films.

## Consumer news does double-time in a year of double-digit inflation

*In a year when inflation became an issue everyone could relate to, stations found that consumer-news segments are the news that everybody's watching. Stations have hired consumer reporters, who generally do more than just document the rise in grocery prices. The thrust in televised consumer segments was action-oriented, with stations offering everything from local bargain-hunting tips to full-fledged consumer defender units that investigate consumer complaints and expose fraudulent business schemes.*

### WMPB's 'Survival Kit': One local PTV consumer effort will make it as a national show

Noncommercial WMPB(TV) Baltimore offers one of the more polished and unconventional of the current crop of consumer-reporting efforts, a show that will be seen nationally this fall as the Public Broadcasting Service adds the *Consumer Survival Kit* to its program portfolio.

Based on the premise that levity goes a long way toward making hard facts palatable, the program gives consumers a song and dance (in the literal sense) about consumer problems. It also uses skits, puppets, mini-docs, a "paperwork pundit" and occasional "friendly experts" to convey information on topics ranging from food to funerals.

The program, according to producer Vincent Clews, is "solution-oriented." As its name implies, the *Survival Kit* attempts to arm consumers with the knowledge they need to know to keep high and dry in the marketplace.

In order to help the consumer who's "spending more but enjoying it less," a program on food quizzes consumers on basic food-buying knowledge and includes a snappy "Supermarket Rag" and a "Waltz of the Turkey and Whole-Wheat Bread" in a segment on protein. But, it's more than frivolity as the show manages to slip in hard information on food buys, nutrients, processing, labeling and dating, relevant legislation and food stamps.

To supplement the messages of the TV medium, the program turns to print, and for the cost of mailing, provides viewers with an information packet. Included in the kit accompanying the insurance program are article reprints, bibliographies, brochures, a summary of first aid procedures, even a personal wallet-size medical emergency card.

### The active voice at KYW-TV for reporting consumer items

No one needs television to tell about the pocketbook squeeze of inflation. That's old news. What's new news from KYW-TV Philadelphia is what to do about it. The result: an ongoing series of inflation-oriented "how to" news features.

The station's *Inflation Fighter Tips* are aired nightly during the 6 and 11 p.m.



**Dig it.** Many stations gave down-to-earth advice to viewers on how to beat inflation. KYW-TV Philadelphia weatherman Bill Kuster grew an "inflation garden" and used it as a demonstration for his gardening tips.

newscasts. Money-saving ideas the station has provided range from how to make the most of "bargain basement" shopping to pre-packing snacks and lunches for family vacation trips. The station makes inflation-fighting a participatory effort, airing viewer suggestions in addition to its own reports.

News woman Orien Reid handles a weekly "shopping cart" feature that documents rising grocery prices with visits to local supermarkets to purchase a fixed list of staple items. However, Ms. Reid doesn't get all of her news from one basket; the consumer reporter also offers shopping tips and information on food specials to help viewers keep costs down.

Weatherman Bill Kuster also gets into the inflation-fighting act at KYW-TV. He keeps viewers amused and informed as he catalogues the growth of his "inflation garden"—a plot of ground on the station's front lawn where he raises tomatoes, peppers, beans, cucumbers, squash and carrots. His gardening tips tell viewers how to use amateur gardening to keep the bite of inflation from eating into food budgets.

### WHBF-TV follows up, follows through on consumer complaints

WHBF-TV Rock Island, Ill., has applied the personal touch to its consumer reporting. Following up complaints from local citizens, the station contacts the businesses involved, then airs reports of its consumer research—filmed at the complainant's home.

The complaints have ranged from failure to receive mail-order cheese valued at a few dollars to a \$4,000 rip-off by a swimming pool manufacturer. Results of the station's investigations are reported, both in cases that are successfully resolved and those in which the firm has failed to reply satisfactorily. Results are also forwarded to the Illinois Consumer Fraud and Protection Division. The local consumer unit segments are aired nightly in news reports and provide a local tie-in to nationally syndicated *Consumer Reports* segments.