

TELEVISION

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QUARTERLY

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THE JOURNAL OF THE  
NATIONAL ACADEMY OF  
TELEVISION ARTS  
AND SCIENCES

Published by The National Academy of  
Television Arts and Sciences with the  
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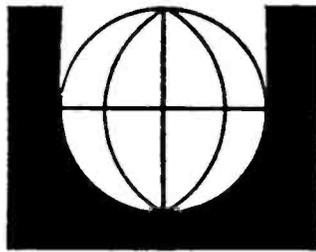
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## THE COMMUNITY

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If not all broadcasters have yet found the mechanisms with which to serve community needs and tastes to the satisfaction of various interested parties, there is every reason to believe that they have begun to ask the right questions. Moreover, if the range of thinking in evidence at *Group W's* Cleveland Conference is any index, they have discovered whom to ask the questions of.

From the Ford Foundation came *Paul Ylvisaker* to tell broadcasters something of the dynamic changes occurring in our social structure, and to outline their community responsibilities in a time less than perfect. There needs to be, implied Ylvisaker, a marriage of interest between communities and broadcasters. No sooner had he given adventurous description to the possibility of such a wedding than *Aline Saarinen*, mindful of the natural concerns of a true lady, joined argument by pointing out that no FCC directive to determine community likes will bring it off properly. In matters of taste, Mrs. Saarinen insists, romance must bloom first, followed, if necessary, by conscience—not a shotgun.

Still another Cleveland Conference venture, a major review by a distinguished panel of the nature of communications as a creative process, turned once more upon the matter of not only *how* and *why* they communicate, but *who* is being reached, and moved, by their efforts.

By now in a thoroughly communal frame of mind, it came as little surprise to us to discover that the balance of this issue carries no contribution which does not, in one

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## THE COMMUNICATORS

manner or another, turn upon the same matter—the relationship between television and the community. *Sprague Vonier* points obliquely to the problem of determining people's needs and interests by observing that broadcasters may already be doing *too much* to reflect them. He asks that we consider some of the potential dangers of establishing a safe, bland urban outlook in which everyone has to live together, even if it kills them. In a dialogue, *George C. Scott* and *E. G. Marshall* reveal a preoccupation with social, as well as artistic, functions of the modern actor who is thrust into a drama which reflects the social processes at work.

Nor is the pattern disturbed in our two final essays—devoted to analyses, formal and informal, of the fan mail received at TV networks. *Charles Winick* provides a report of his painstaking research into the psychological implications of fan mail received from children. *Barbara Sapinsley* offers her reaction to letters addressed to *The Twentieth Century* program, drawing the inevitable conclusion at which most readers of her article may also arrive—that “it takes all kinds.”

Out of it all, television people may draw the security of knowing, as Paul Ylvisaker puts it, that if they can see “bricks being thrown at them from all directions, they can at least be sure that they are not far from where they are needed.” Yet, if they also consider that it's the bricks they *don't* see which do the damage, the comfort is small indeed.

# CONSCIENCE AND THE COMMUNITY

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PAUL YLVISAKER

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It is in the law and on his conscience that the broadcaster has to have "due regard" for the "needs of the community he serves." These phrases are about as vague and elastic as the due process and the general welfare clauses of the American Constitution, but that's their genius. For it is the uncertainties of the Constitution—far more than its fixed meanings—that have prodded the nation to think, to question, and then to quicken its pursuit of a happier and more perfect union.

Therefore, I would argue first—and last—that broadcasters stretch their minds and resources to explore the uncertain and the unspecified in the open-ended charge they have been given. The words "due regard," "needs" and "community" are far-flung territories with infinitely elastic frontiers. If the broadcaster has any conscience and curiosity, he can keep exploring them until his franchises have been taken over by his competitors' grandchildren—and still not have exhausted the room for growth and invention these words allow.

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In 1955 *Paul Ylvisaker* joined the Ford Foundation and served as a member of the United Nations team of advisers on the Hanshin Metropolitan Region project in Japan. Mr. Ylvisaker received his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. He is presently Director of the Ford Foundation's Public Affairs Program.

*That the broadcaster search—and search continuously and creatively—is what this nation of listeners, I think, is asking him in the name of the law and the Federal Communications Commission. At least that's what I would try to impress upon him, using the word "community" as a launching pad for a few sample explorations.*

If America's radio and television owners want to follow along, they must leave their lawyers behind. This new community we live in—the American metropolis of 1963—has no precedents; it is changing faster than any executive, legislature or judge can keep up with it; it admits of no final governing code; its social particles are so subtly fused and transmutable they can't be isolated long enough even to classify; and its future is so immediately caught up in its past and present that we don't know what tenses to use when describing it—except we do know that whatever the time, it's imperfect.

The broadcaster needs first to take a closer look at this phenomenon. He might begin by dividing his community into four concentric rings. The core can be labeled the central business district; the next is that growing wasteland between the last new office building and the first new ranchhouse, aptly titled "the Gray Area"; the third is suburbia; the last we will simply call "And Beyond." And I would caution again that we have to keep these frontiers infinitely elastic. Admittedly, such a map may not look exactly like a given community. For example, Cleveland—stopped on one side as it is by Lake Erie—could only grow as a semi-circle, not fully in the round. Another community may not have a "Gray Area"—which simply means the city fathers zoned or gerrymandered it into some neighboring community, and a broadcaster will have to cross some local boundary lines and verboten signs to locate it. Or he may say his signal—and therefore his community—doesn't reach into more than one or two of the rings, certainly not into the "And Beyond." But remember, the human particles of this community are constantly on the move. In the tiniest segment of this community come and go every possible type of listener: maid, merchant, commuter, thief, Negro, Texan, Arabic chief.

We could stop to argue these and other miscellanies, but let us recognize at once that I'm cutting as quickly as I can into the diversities—and the generalities—of the American community. It happens that as communities grow, these diversities tend to get localized. Wealth and status tend to congregate in the core and outer rings; poverty and disadvantage usually get caught in be-

tween, or find pockets of shelter next to the walls of affluence, whether as slum dwellings a block behind Central Park West, or as shantytown on the rim of Fresno, California.

Now here is where the human animal—the listener is one and the broadcaster another—is at odds with himself and his place in nature. Anyone who has studied ecology knows that each species of plant and animal finds its own special sector of the environment to live and hide in. If we were to take a vertical cross-section of the air in a tropical jungle, we would find hundreds of horizontal layers into which the area's variety of insects have segregated themselves. And where they meet, they eat each other.

Man (who is supposedly different from the rest of God's creatures in being social, adaptable and humane) is tending to live like the insect—stratified, routinized and defensive—in his own communities; and I wonder whether newspapers and broadcasters have abetted or aborted this tendency.

I would argue that the greatest need of the community for which the broadcaster should have due regard is to have its diversities regularly brought face to face, to find the ties that bind, and to make permeable the membranes which separate. Without this civilizing process of regular confrontation, this evocative but healing act of dialogue, the communities can be jungles. Authors have grown rich and citizens cynical describing them in precisely that language.

What about the broadcaster? Like most of the educated and better-heeled members of the community, has he, too, hemmed himself in to the blindered existence of central business district and suburb? Does the ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new bank building or the commercialized unveiling of a downtown renewal project get more of his attention than the failure to rehabilitate a run-down school or to reduce the number of bars in the Gray Area?

What faces in what context appear in his spots and commercials? His serials? His newscasts? Or should we only hold him publicly to account for what appears in his "public service" programs? All of which may be another form of the lower animal kingdom's tendency to survive by segregation.

Incidentally, an example of courage and constructive action along these lines is revealed in what the Detroit public schools have done with their reading primers. Late as the rest of us, they awoke to the fact their school-children were increasingly Negro and low-income; but the books given these children to read were written and illustrated in 19th century white middleclass. So Detroit rewrote and recolored; and once-discouraged teachers are finding that the

school-children respond as would be expected. Reading is for real; they're inside the books and no longer outside the system.

Sensitive matters? Loaded? Controversial? Maybe. But well within the range of the law and the broadcaster's conscience. He is already deeply involved: his signal, even though it may emanate from one safe corner of the community, is being received in all others. His almost exclusive attention to the white face, to middle-class ways of doing things, to suburban culture is not being missed in the opposite corners of the community. His impact is various: in some, it breeds hostility; in others, a further breakdown of pride and self-respect; in everyone, a wish—bordering on a compulsion—to share by hook or crook in the spoils of the dominant system.

If broadcasting could choose only one community need to serve in this decade of the Second Emancipation, it should be to fan the small fires of self-respect which have been lit in the breasts of the community's neglected and disadvantaged citizens. This year it was the Negro; next year, it may well be the Spanish- and Mexican-American; the year after, perhaps, it may be the American Indian or the mountain white; and who knows, the year after, we Norwegians may become Vikings again.

Broadcasting can lead; it does not always have to follow. Its means and its impact are much more powerful than broadcasters care to admit when accused by intellectuals of negative social influence, almost as powerful as they claim when making a pitch to sponsors and advertisers. For the public media can pay public attention—and it is neglect that has been eroding the self-confidence and capacity for self-help in the Gray Areas of American communities.

Broadcasters can interpret and explain—and it is ignorance that has helped breed the contempt which is the stifling air in which the kids of our Gray Areas have to grow up.

Broadcasters can differentiate—and release individuals from the bondage of group identification in which the inhabitants of our slums and ghettos are caught.

Broadcasters can go behind crime, to indicate causes. They can go beyond arrests, to hold up the mirror to the faults in our administration of justice. They can go beyond relief scandals, to ask why we still substitute charity for equality. They can go beyond protest and show the civic tasks that remain after the marchers go home. And they can bolster by the simple act of understanding those who, in the midst of the Gray Areas, begin to walk tall—who may be the Negro father in a matriarchal society; the lone mountaineer

in an urban society he wasn't born to; a kid on the street corner who passed by his first rumble to hunt for his first job.

What is done in commercial programming has as much, if not more, meaning and impact than what is done under a public service label. Because listeners from both sides of the tracks—the ones who vote for Presidents who appoint Federal Communications Commissioners—have an unerring instinct for judging a broadcaster's character from what he does when the chips are down—when his money's on the line—they're not persuaded by how he behaves on Sundays. If his sponsored time doesn't reflect his entire community's needs and tastes, nobody's fooled when he preaches differently during the sanctimonious hours. And if broadcasters do not know and live with every part of the community—on the job and off—they will hardly be duly regarded as serving its needs.

Also, as the broadcaster has found, when it comes to public service programming not everyone is tuning in. Here I'm on his side. How does he attract a heel-dragging, sofa-bound citizenry to the sober mood and long-word-listening requirements of public service broadcasting? It is hard to put questions of foreign aid and local taxes into the language of Chester and Marshal Dillon, without limping on both legs and winding up on broadcasting's Boot Hill. And tough, too, to liven a round-table to the pace of *I Love Lucy*. (Though to be fair, my kids have learned as much about science from Walt Disney as they have from school; and as for sociology and human relations, well, let's simply say that TV has made them precocious.)

Controversy has been the solution generally adopted by newspapers for "educating the public," and is now slowly making its way into radio and TV. The principle is so old and tested that its coming will be welcomed. But not as a panacea. Controversy may open the way to understanding—but it is no substitute—and it is too easily come by. Any ingenious reporter or programmer can find or invent it. But what more?

The answer, I think, lies in distinguishing between conflict and confrontation. Conflict usually develops when confrontation is overdue. Whether broadcasters or politicians or citizenry are to blame, confrontation of the diverse parts of our community has not and does not occur regularly and thoroughly enough; and we are in serious trouble in our communities because it has not. We have tried to find cubbyholes where we can safely deposit each of our interests and concerns: ghettos for Negroes; shantytowns for migrants; suburbs for middle-class school-children; shopping centers

and downtown plazas for business; tax havens for industries; circles and centers for culture; and cars, bars and airplanes to get away from it all.

We run around the corner to get away from our neighbor and end up colliding with him as he runs around his corner from us. There's no escape; no man is an island; there cannot be passers-by—only the inevitable face-to-face between the Samaritan and the man he might easily have been.

Again, the crying need of the community—and the charge the broadcaster has been given—is to ensure the timely confrontation of its diverse and diverging elements. Most often, perhaps, through controversy; not avoiding conflict, when conflict is a fact.

But people are fascinated by differences, whether or not they are in conflict, and eternally curious about how differences may be resolved. "Harvest of Shame," "Walk in My Shoes," "Superfluous People"—these are visual adventures that have dramatized the point. There are in broadcasting's creative capacity a thousand and one other ventures that can be tried—and many that have already been devised—to show and explain the diversities that make up our communities, and in doing so, to pave the way for resolving differences other than through neglect or civic war.

We cannot underestimate what efforts like this can do to ease the growingly impossible job of the community's civic and political leaders. They stand at the crossing point of the community's differences, but are judged and harassed by citizens who can indulge the luxury of single standards and simple solutions. It is time we took our citizens into the community's kitchen, where they too can feel the heat; they will be more sympathetic with the political cook and may even be induced to help him serve. All of which makes me wonder why it is we have not built a dramatic program around the mayor, who up till now has been caricatured as a buffoon. I do not mean a public service program where the mayor is given free time to tell of his accomplishments—essential as this may be. But a series which in fiction can show fact. *The Defenders* has done this for law; when does City Hall get equal time and compassion?

Not, I suspect, until broadcasters have themselves lived long and intimately with the community they are to serve, have acquired the confidence and roots which enable them to confront what the rest of us may avoid, and have suffered their way through to understanding and acceptance. I can sympathize with a Boston broadcaster who said that only after 26 years is he being listened to in that community. We cannot all wait that long. But neither is the

community something to be understood by passing interviews with men-on-the-street or brought to salvation by itinerant preachers.

Serving the community's needs is not an assignment to be given or taken lightly. It requires a commitment which should be measured in years of living and learning in every nook and cranny of the community, and at every level of income and status.

It also means detachment. Among other things, from the community as it exists in favor of what it will or might be. Time in our generation is moving so fast that the present is 50 per cent future. Yet the human animal finds it hard to set his watch ahead. Someone has to help keep future time. After watching Hugh Downs erase the difference between time zones by taking the hour hand off his clock, I am encouraged to think broadcasters may be the ones to wipe out the barriers between present and future, and to confront the community today with its emerging tomorrow.

Let me be specific. We live today in the straight-jacket of past governmental jurisdictions; the average community is severed by hundreds of yesterday's boundary lines. The broadcast signal can cross these lines; it might even take today's voters along and ease their passage from a fragmented metropolis into a united community.

Or microphones and cameras can be taken into our schools, to evoke from the manner and mind of our children the problems and potential of tomorrow's society. A lot can be found, more can be projected, and some will have to be imagined. But the broadcaster's mind and the community's will be stretched from present trivia to the significance of a future that is already with us.

Why not a regular presentation of what the community's tomorrow already is or may be like? Or should be? It's been a long time since Socrates provoked Athens to greatness by confronting it with perfection and goading it with The Question. Baltimore has been anti-climactic since H. L. Mencken. Will broadcasting produce the equivalent? Our communities could use some gadflies; and they cannot all be working for foundations, newspapers, and the FCC.

The broadcaster, then, is asked to search, to confront, to agitate and to understand; to make a commitment, to do his homework, to look ahead, and to remain detached. And when will he know whether he has done his job and discharged his obligations? Like the rest of us dedicated to the public interest, *never*. His frontiers and obligations will always stretch or be stretched beyond him. It is frustrating, but challenging and never dull.

And as long as America's broadcasters can see bricks being thrown at them from every side, they can be sure they are not far from the place they are needed.

# A MATTER OF TASTE

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ALINE SAARINEN

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It is obvious that the tastes of a community are as complex as the community itself. Of course, community taste is not a homogeneous thing. We can think of taste in any field as a sort of striated pyramid—a pyramid with layers at which the most informed and experienced taste is at the apex, and the least informed and experienced taste is at the broad base.

To be sure, there are local preferences and special interests; but I think that we can still speak of taste nationally because taste is determined by scores of factors including habits, customs, background, education, exposure, snobbery, isolation, communication, and so on. In every community there are people for every level of the pyramid; and the people in different communities on the same level have more in common with people on the same level in another community than on different levels in the same community. Music critics, for instance, who would presumably be at the apex of the music triangle, are united in panning Mantovani; and whether they are eating shrimp creole in New Orleans or beans in Boston or scrapple in Philadelphia, millions and millions of people in these same locales think that the sound of those strings—sort of like warm, viscous showers going over you—represents the best in music.

Nor do the shapes of these pyramids remain constant. We are being constantly reminded that, in America, we live in what is

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*Aline Saarinen* regularly appears on the *Today* show as a commentator on the visual arts. A graduate of Vassar College and New York University, Mrs. Saarinen is author of the 1958 best-seller *The Proud Possessors*. She was seen recently in the NBC program *The Art of Collecting*.

commonly called a cultural "explosion." It is not an explosion. It is an evolution in which sensibilities and perceptions are constantly changing and sharpening and refining, and in which horizons are broadening while imaginations are stretching. It is an evolution that is generated by many circumstances; and among them are increased prosperity—which has allowed time for activities beyond money-making. Additional factors which contribute to this evolution include better education and accelerating travel. Travel, more than any other factor, perhaps, shakes people out of complacency and makes them receptive to new ideas and values; and, of course, to exposure—in which the mass media have also played an enormous role. But this cultural evolution itself has no measurable, definable or uniform rate of growth. As it progresses, it keeps changing the shapes of taste pyramids.

The Federal Communications Commission has directed broadcasters to go out and discover the tastes of their community, and then fulfill them. But whose taste—and at what moment? Let us assume that taste is not the complex and fluctuating thing which I think it actually is. Can there be some perfect census-taking method of determining it? Of course not. We have not even begun to perfect methods for predetermining how people will vote. But if there were such a method, I am certain the pollsters of taste would soon discover that the valid and strategic phrase is not "I know what I like," but "I like what I know." People like what is familiar, recognizable, and easy; that is why taste changes very slowly, and why there is a reluctance to step over new thresholds. And if we could discover the reasons that make people finally venture into a new experience, I think we would probably find these reasons as diverse as the people themselves.

Such a canvass might also reveal that danger in assessing taste which I call the "category fallacy." It is not too difficult to score, very conscientiously, the number of people who said that they "liked" drama or music or sports or art or whatever. The fallacy lies in giving these results meaning when the terms are so meaningless and generic. During the war I worked for awhile in a hospital in Washington in the men's ward, and I would often ask the men if they would like something to read. It took me a little while to discover that the one or two who asked for "the" book meant the Bible. Others who asked for "a" book meant a comic book. A poll of taste among these men would have indicated that they wanted books and they liked to read. Similarly, two people will say they love art. But one man's Picasso is another man's Norman Rockwell.

Categorically, they are both art, but our information is meaningless as such.

If broadcasters observe the second part of the FCC directive and consult with the leaders in community life, they will be told emphatically what a handful of specialized, dedicated leaders thinks the public *ought* to like, and will hence learn as little about the real tastes and needs of a community as was discovered about the elephant by the five blind men. I do not mean to be impudent, but I do believe that such canvass and such consultation as the FCC has directed would be of little value. And I go even further and say that if the broadcaster tried to follow the leads discovered in such investigation, it would have an adverse effect on programming by producing exactly the opposite from what I presume the FCC has in mind.

In short, following the results of a public canvass would simply force the broadcaster to conform to the "I like what I know" attitudes. Unfortunately, sometimes some of them already do. He would never dare to take a new step, try an adventurous experiment, or develop a new technique. The perfect example of the kind of show that would never have come on the air by this process is the BBC's version of *That Was the Week That Was*. If the communities in England had been asked if they would like that kind of show—if they had a need or desire or taste for it—they would not have known what the canvassers were talking about.

The effects on programming of what I would call the "category fallacy" can be extended further, and broken down into four distinct kinds of effects which are involved in the measurement of taste—and which can produce disastrous results if applied in programming.

First there is a very peculiar attitude in America today that anything called Culture (which includes all the things that masquerade under the name of Culture) is somehow morally good, uplifting, and a means of salvation. The notion has spawned a group of women whom Russell Lynes has rather pertinently called the "culturettes." In such reasoning certain categories are prejudged as noble, and certain others as contemptuous. To apply this kind of reasoning is to ask whether the FCC would give good marks if a broadcaster produced a ballet, and bad marks if he produced a western. Moreover, it allows no room for the important consideration of quality. A ballet might be dull, the music mediocre, the production poor, and the whole thing bad television—of the type which might even prejudice any but the most confirmed balleto-

manes against any more ballet viewing. A western, on the other hand, might be superbly written, incisively acted, filled with insight into human reactions and nature, imaginatively filmed, and be very good television. Yet the category definition of "Culture" has missed the mark in judging the two efforts.

The category system creates a second false line of reasoning in that it leads to the kind of billing which attracts an already interested audience and tends to discourage others. The imaginative techniques used in many religious programs are missed by people who are not lured by that category. One of the reasons that I like dealing with art and architecture and the look of America on the *Today* and the *Sunday* shows is because I don't get an audience with an a priori interest in art as I did when working for the *New York Times*, where people interested in art turned to the art page. If I can make what I am doing good television, I can capture the interest of a much wider audience. I can catch them off base.

Third, the category system tends to encourage qualified judgments—"A" for effort and other special yardsticks instead of absolute demands for excellence in the use of the medium. I am working now on two specials, one for CBS and one for NBC, which will unhappily be billed as "art" shows. All of us involved will be heartbroken if they are rated as "pretty good—for art shows." We want them to be good television. We want no categorical indulgence.

Finally, the category system tends to make many people think—whether snobbishly or simply in innocence—that a program which is sustaining rather than sponsored has some particular virtue. We discovered that attitude in a collector while working on a forthcoming color special on the art of collecting. It was the opinion of one of these collectors that the program was immediately demeaned when we told him that a sponsor had bought it—not only for one showing, but for a second showing! When one encounters this attitude, one must simply argue that the purpose of a mass medium—and I think this cannot be stressed enough—is to reach a mass audience. I am talking about *mass* audience, not the kind of audience a literary critic thinks is a mass audience. Economically, then, sponsorship is the only way a mass medium can really work. We are proud that a sponsor has faith in our ability to deal with what is essentially of interest to the minority.

Perhaps the most dangerously adverse effect on programming might result, however, from applying that part of the FCC directive which suggests that the broadcaster bring community leaders into the act on a recognized and formal basis instead of the natural,

informal basis of give-and-take that any responsible person in a community has with any other person in a community. Aside from the fact that these leaders must, of necessity, pressure and lobby for their own interests (and hence are not good witnesses to the tastes of the whole community), they are singularly ill-equipped to understand the complexities, the complications, and the special talents required to produce good radio or good television shows—and I know because I have worked with museum directors. It seems to me preposterous that such leaders should have a *specific* and *formalized* voice in programming, as it would be were they to be designated “consultants” to theatrical producers or editors of magazines.

The heart of my argument is that the FCC directive to discover the tastes and needs of a community, and then to fulfill them, indicates what I think is a misunderstanding of the nature and proper purpose of radio and television as mass media. As a consequence, the directive puts the cart before the horse. Critics of television—and particularly the more intellectual critics to whom something like a million, eight-hundred thousand sounds like a mass—do not accept the simple fact that we are talking, hopefully, not in terms of one and two million, but of ten, twenty, thirty, forty, even hundreds of millions of people. Broadcasting’s potential is truly filled when it can reach this kind of mass audience.

I do not think that television should be expected to function as a parent, teacher, minister, disciplinarian, guardian, social worker, arbiter of taste in society—nor even a philanthropist who subsidizes local “talent” when it is not talented. I think the role of television and radio is to communicate, to share. Television, especially, can say with immediacy and with impact: this is shocking; this is absurd; this is tragic; this is beautiful; this is ugly; this is fine; this is challenging; this is interesting; this is funny; this is *happening*. Its major role, I think, is to expose—to expose to a mass audience the millions of facets that are alike. I think these media should not be asked to shape society. Their role is to mirror it truthfully, fully, courageously—not to give the answers and be the disciplinarians, but to affect that confrontation of which so many of us have been talking. They should give society the information so that it will shape itself.

It seems to me, therefore, that the FCC directive puts things backwards. The broadcaster should be exhorted to go forward, to put up the flares as his conscience and his convictions dictate; and then he should, after the fact, be guided by a constant and organic interplay of response between the audience and himself, between

offering and response. I do not mean the response of the self-appointed and self-interested spokesman and pressure groups. I do not mean the response of the interested few or even the response of the high-minded gentlemen of the FCC. I mean the response of a mass audience.

And it is exactly this audience response (what has been called the invisible pressure) that is indicated when we read of the public spending \$25,000,000 for long-playing records of serious music; of over a billion books being bought; of five million people visiting the Metropolitan Museum. The manufacturers of records, directors of museums, conductors of symphonies, and publishers of books do not canvass and predetermine public taste. They are guided by a free dialogue between what they offer and what is demanded, between what they make available and the audience response. And they step ahead; and they see what happens; and they take another step forward.

At the moment, we can measure this response only quantitatively; and quantitative measurements are, of course, imperfect, incomplete, and very often deceptive. What we need, obviously, are new means to measure audience response. Not audience demands or desires, but their response qualitatively and in depth. Only through knowledge of the audience's response can the broadcaster know whether he has gone too far out in front, is too far behind or where, how and why he has succeeded or failed. If he does get too far out in front, and loses his audience altogether, he has lost all purpose and all the power he has—in the same way, I believe, that he will if he keeps on lagging too far behind.

I would, then, plead with the FCC to rescind the kind of programming directives to which I have referred, and, instead, to exhort the broadcaster to use his conscience, his courage, and his creativity. He must have absolute freedom to follow his own convictions and those of the creative people who are working for him—young people who are growing up in this medium, and who have it in their blood. In the end, we must trust these people ultimately to shape these mass media, as, in a democracy, they shape all their other institutions.

# HOW TO IDENTIFY A NETWORK



*A television network's personality is as individual as a snow crystal.*

*But it takes no microscope to tell one network from another. Just a pair of eyes and ears.*

*The programs themselves spell out the difference—and they're right up there on the screen for anyone to examine.*

*In the case of NBC, the character and credo of the network is exemplified by such offerings as:*

**The American Revolution of '63**, a prime-time, three-hour examination of the civil rights issue in all of its aspects.

**That Was The Week That Was**,

a satirical special whose boldness and freshness brought forth the kind of audience and critical response that made the subsequent scheduling of the weekly version inevitable.

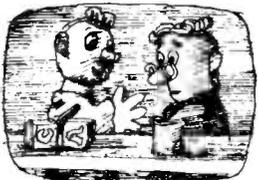
**The Huntley-Brinkley Report**, a thorough, lively and authoritative news program that's headed by the most famous



reporting team in the history of journalism.

**Greece: The Golden Age**, an NBC News special that—through an inspired survey of Greek ruins and artifacts—captured the spirit of an era that has been called “man’s finest hour.”

**NBC Children’s Theatre**, which has given a new dimension to programming for the young, with such delightful specials as the puppet fantasy, “Quillow and the Giant,” and the orchestral treat, “Of Sights and Sounds.”

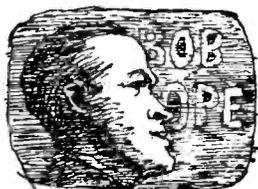


**The Kremlin**, an NBC News look at the turbulent course of Russian history, told in terms of the Moscow citadel on which several centuries of that history have centered.



**Hallmark Hall of Fame**, the distinguished drama series which has won new plaudits for its recent productions of “The Patriots” and “A Cry of Angels.”

**Bob Hope Presents the Chrysler Theatre** and “Chrysler Presents a Bob Hope Special,” an exciting duo of series in which the fabulous Mr. Hope is either introducing a first-rank drama or cavorting in one of his top-level variety shows.



**Experiment in Excellence**, an NBC News special that examined both the importance of the dedicated school teacher and the new educational devices being used across the nation.

**Profile on Communism**, a four-part series of NBC News specials that explored the history and concept of Communism, and



its challenge to the free world.

**Today** and **Tonight**. At opposite ends of the day's schedule, these NBC originals continue to give viewers an informal but meaningful look at just about every phase of our life, times and culture.

**The Gulf Instant News Specials**, whose remarkable record of coverage of fast-breaking news has been augmented this past year by such reportorial achievements as "The Loss Of The Thresher," "The March On Washington," and "Revolt In Viet Nam."

*It is our conviction that the foregoing examples—representing the very best in news, entertainment and educational programming—identify NBC just as certainly as do our call-letters.*

*We are proud of our shows. We are even prouder that the viewer has come to recognize them—and the network philosophy they reflect—as belonging distinctively and exclusively to NBC.*



# TELEVISION— THE URBAN OUTLOOK

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SPRAGUE VONIER

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Writing in an introduction to a recently-published paperback edition of the McGuffey reader, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. observes that that venerable handbook of frontier learning had the virtue, in its time, of providing a common frame of cultural reference to people in scattered, isolated communities and of vastly divergent cultural backgrounds. Regardless of the merits of its contents or its value as a tool in teaching, it did help unify a nation by giving America's pioneers a handy set of common literary references, perhaps even a common set of popular values.

It is possible that much of the same thing is happening to this nation as a consequence of television—but on a much more universal scale. It is possible that we—as a people—are drawing strong impressions of what are our rights before the law by watching *The Defenders*. And that we are drawing conclusions as to what to expect of our medical men as the result of impressions gathered by watching Ben Casey and Doctor Kildare. Perhaps even the least

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A television executive with WTMJ-TV, the Milwaukee *Journal* station, *Sprague Vonier* has been concerned with mass communications for over 25 years. He established the first course in television production at the University of Wisconsin (Milwaukee) in 1954, and produced an early televised-education course given for college credit. During World War II Mr. Vonier was with the Armed Forces Motion Picture Service.

sophisticated, the most underprivileged, even those kept in ignorance for generations are drawing more than entertainment from the television tube.

Just as surely as the McGuffey Reader once represented the common cultural background of the literate American, television today represents the common cultural background of the American with electricity in his home—and that is nearly everyone.

Just as surely as the people of India once drew their impressions of America from watching silent westerns and Charlie Chaplin movies, the American today draws his impression of the world beyond his doorstep from what he sees on the television screen.

How vast and how complete is this process of homogenizing the popular attitudes, impressions and standards of our nation? Ninety-three per cent of all the homes wired for electricity in the United States have television sets—or over 50 million television homes. It has never before been possible, in all human history, to get so many people concerned over one thing—except perhaps the need for water, food or shelter.

That a vast number of people have in common an electronic possession is of no small significance in drawing conclusions about our society. American television is projecting upon the public a point-of-view, an outlook, an attitude and a set of standards that is very nearly uniform and consistent.

This point-of-view may be characterized as “the standard, northern United States, urbanized outlook.” For easy handling, call it the “urban outlook.”

The “urban outlook” may be summarized in a series of popular attitudes which background the general orientation of most northern city dwellers: Hospitals are well equipped. Society is prepared to and able to come to the rescue in time of the individual crisis. Fair play is important. Judges are sober. Policemen should be even-handed, calm and incorruptible, strong, brave and understanding. Everyone has the right to speak his mind. Lawyers are smart. Everyone is entitled to the best education of which he is capable. The able and diligent will, with a little luck, do well in the world. Alcoholism is a disease. People should be kind to animals and children. Everyone is created equal.

Now, the northern, urban citizen may not always behave as if these were his standards and he may find out that many of his fellow-citizens don't either; but if he were asked to check each of those statements as “true” or “false,” he would regard nearly all of them as true.

The hugely successful television programs which may reach one-third of all the television sets in the nation in a single night—sometimes 20 million homes—all reflect in their own way some aspect of this “urban outlook”:

*The Beverly Hillbillies*—Money talks; much of what passes for “culture” is shallow snobbery practiced by pretentious phonies.

*The Naked City*—Senior police officers are wise and patient; young ones may be hot-headed, but they learn.

*Doctor Kildare* and *Ben Casey*—Doctors are dedicated; all the forces of modern medicine will be unleashed to relieve a human in agony, regardless of cost.

*The Defenders*—Justice will be served.

*Sing Along with Mitch*—We are essentially a happy, optimistic people.

*Jack Paar*—Americans can go anywhere; publicity is good.

The list, obviously, could go on for many pages, but the above examples serve to illustrate the point. And the point is that these attitudes are being projected effectively, repeatedly and with great dramatic force into all corners of our society. Moreover, urban dwellers themselves are acquiring, through the television habit, a common source for and uniformity in these attitudes.

Couple this information with the observed phenomenon that life tends to imitate literature and we have the making of social revolution. Saying it another way, constant exposure to “standard urban values” is very likely to lead some 160 million tube-watching Americans to *expect* reality to take on the attributes of the television fiction they have come to love so well. Contemplating the above premise may lead one to picture a nation bemused by dreams born of television; and such a picture may not be entirely distorted.

The acquisition of some or even many of these “standard urban values” may well be of benefit both to the individual and to his society. Certainly a nation whose people believe that man *should* expect justice and *should* have the right of self-expression is equipping itself for survival as a democracy, even though the lesson may have been learned through the emotional experience of identifying with characters in television dramas.

When the beholder of television confronts a reality at sharp odds with his own comfortable viewpoint, his reaction may be hostile and even violent—especially if he has absorbed his set of values over a long period of time starting in early childhood. A danger asserts itself, therefore, when education to reality and to the skills

implied in equality and self-expression fail to keep pace with the aspirations of men.

Television offers a unique opportunity to communicate directly and simultaneously with nearly the entire population, in a way that not even radio does, with its many outlets and, consequently, fractionalized audiences. Television communication, contrary to commonly held opinion, is not received by a "mass of people"—but is received, instead, by one or two or a handful of people at a time, each group receiving the message simultaneously but isolated and remote from the others.

Thus there is an opportunity to influence tens-of-millions of people in an instant without any interaction between them and without an opportunity on their part to counter-react to the originator of the influence.

Why does this matter? It matters, I believe, because television causes us to short-circuit one vital step in the classic and traditional process of forming public opinion. Classically, public opinion has been formed by (1) an event (2) stimulating individual reactions and opinions, which are (3) discussed with and checked against the reactions of others. Cross-checking and discussion leads to (4) the recasting and modification of individually held opinions and, finally, (5) to the jelling of a discernible "Public Opinion."

It is step number 3 and its outgrowth, step number 4, which may be by-passed in the age of television, unless careful education imbues the viewer with emotional and intellectual prudence.

Instant, direct and powerful communication may cause opinions to jell long before the opportunity for public discussion arises. But television is not the only force in our age that tends to replace true public opinion by mass passion. It should be pointed out that opportunities for public discussion were disappearing rapidly in our society long before television became a major factor on the American scene; but television has reduced the time-lag between action and reaction so greatly that spontaneous, over-reaction by the public seems to be an ever-present possibility.

As an example, during the Cuban crisis one had the feeling that great masses of the public might, at any moment, bolt from the cities without any clear plan or destination, had the news not been handled with the utmost care. The instantaneous, simultaneous character of such a reaction—arrived at independently by each family group—could be appalling. A foretaste of such hysteria was implicit in Orson Welles' famous *War of the Worlds* panic, triggered by radio.

This is not to say that mass hysteria never existed before man learned mass communication, but it is to say that the speed with which hysteria could strike in the age of electronics stuns the imagination. Intelligently used, of course, mass communications may also be employed to forestall and stem mass hysteria.

It is, perhaps, our society's instinct of self-preservation that accounts for the existence of discussion programs on television, especially those discussions which follow major events and major addresses by public figures. These programs provide some measure of discussion by proxy and compensate for the lack of general public discussion.

We are fortunate, however, as a nation, that no skilled television demagogue has seized the affections of the viewers during this period when education lags behind communications technology. Fortunately Castro has not happened here. Those politicians and public figures who have been successful on television thus far are crude practitioners alongside the monsters of seductivity who may be easily envisioned by the professional communications man.

The really dangerous mountebank of the future will be confidential in his manner. He will address his viewers as if he were addressing a crowd, not with the coldness of official office. He will seem to be the private, personal partisan and confidant of each viewer. He will fill, through design of happenstance, the private image of the leader as woven into the mind of each viewer as a part of "the standard urban outlook." He will feed back to the viewing public their own dreams.

No social phenomenon, however, is isolated, and we may see—side-by-side with the reinforcement in TV fiction of what I have called the "standard urban outlook"—an increased exposure of the public, through television, to reality itself.

All through the nation, television stations are expanding their local news programs and, in so doing, reaching out into the community to find stories and to show their viewers what is happening. The national networks, through their great journalists and documentarians such as Fred Friendly, Dave Brinkley, Eric Sevareid and Chet Huntley, are reaching into reality to engage and inform great masses of people.

Real lawyers talk about the law. Real doctors debate medical problems. Real policemen may defend their actions before the eyes of the public they serve.

With each opportunity the public enjoys to confront *objective* reality through television, the viewer perhaps checks this reality

against his acquired "urban outlook" and asks himself whether he might not shape the world closer to his heart's desire.

This, then, is the great contribution that television can and will make to the "urban community": Television can feed back, to the immense audiences it serves, the reality of the environment in which they live. It can and will bring them face-to-face with the people in power, so that each viewer may judge for himself how the world *goes*.

Because all television stations—both commercial and educational—depend for their survival entirely upon an audience commitment, they must be constantly at the work of soliciting that public commitment by reflecting the community they serve.

Increasingly, local television stations will seek out the articulate elements of their own communities and use these elements to involve and interest audiences, not only with fiction but with the real problems of our times.

Whether those "standard urban attitudes" being shaped by TV fiction are adequate to the task is a massive subject in itself. That question, however, may very reasonably be turned back to the educator in the terms that Gilbert Seldes sagely advances: "I don't give a hoot for the few intellectuals that criticize television. I want five million *active* critics. I would sacrifice reading and writing a report on *Ivanhoe* if every student would write a report on *Have Gun, Will Travel*. If we had a GI Bill that said that the one course you must take is 'Mass Media,' we would now already have those five million families who view with a critical eye."

Mr. Seldes, it seems, would change the "standard urban outlook." If he is successful, he will also change television in the process.

**Steve Allen** is a lyricist, composer, public speaker, comedian, pianist, and author of seven books. His compositions include the score for the musical-comedy *Sophie* and title tunes for several motion pictures. Mr. Allen created the *Tonight* show on NBC-TV, and is currently seen on *The Steve Allen Show* for Group W.

One of America's best-known playwrights and producer-directors, **Marc Connelly** is the author of *Green Pastures* and, in collaboration with George S. Kaufman, *Dulcy* and *Beggar on Horseback*. He is equally noted as an educator, having been Professor of Playwriting at Yale University's Drama School for many years.

**Michael H. Dann** entered broadcasting in the late '40s as a comedy writer, then joined the NBC Press Department in 1949. He later moved to NBC Programming and was the innovator of such television specials as *Producers' Showcase* and *Festival of Music*. Mr. Dann is now Vice-President (Programs) for the CBS Television Network.

**Dick Gregory** is a comedian well known for his incisive and penetrating wit. His skill as a high school track star led to an athletic scholarship at Southern Illinois University, where he majored in Business Administration. He lost a job with the U.S. Post Office for putting Mississippi mail in the "foreign" sack.

A Contributing Editor of the *Saturday Review* since 1950, **Robert Lewis Shayon** reports on radio and television in a weekly column. Mr. Shayon created, wrote, and was host-moderator for ABC-TV's *Ethics in Five Acts*, and supervised *You Are There* (CBS) and *The Big Story* (NBC). He edited *The Eighth Art*, a recent collection of essays concerning television.

**Henry Lee Smith**, a member of Phi Beta Kappa, holds a Ph.D. degree from Princeton. For eleven years he was Dean of the School of Languages and Professor of Linguistics at the Foreign Service Institute, Department of State. Presently Mr. Smith is Chairman of the Department of Anthropology and Linguistics at the State University of New York.

**Frank Tooke** has been with Group W since 1936, and in his present position as Area Vice-President (Cleveland) since 1959. Mr. Tooke began his broadcasting career as an announcer, then served as Program Manager at KDKA (Pittsburgh) and KYW (Philadelphia). He has also been General Manager of several Westinghouse stations, among them WBZ-TV in Boston.

# THE CREATORS: *A DISCUSSION*

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STEVE ALLEN  
MARC CONNELLY  
MICHAEL H. DANN  
DICK GREGORY  
ROBERT LEWIS SHAYON  
HENRY LEE SMITH

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*On the first evening of the Cleveland Conference, a group of men who are variously and intimately involved with the act of creative communication met before 400 assembled broadcasters to review and analyze their feelings and attitudes toward the process and function of communication in our time. The discussion was moderated by Group W Vice-President **Frank Tooke**, and a condensed version of what was said then is printed below.*

*Mr. Tooke:* Gentlemen, what is communication? What does it involve? How do you communicate? What makes a communicator? All of these questions will concern us here. Who will begin?

*Mr. Connelly:* I've been working at it for a long time, but I certainly don't pretend to know very much about it. For a good many years at Yale, twice a week, I sat down with a group of young men

and young women who were developing their techniques, their skills, and inquiring into their own potential as playwrights. And the thing that concerned us more than anything else in all those years was the chemistry of communication in the theater. It's the only field that I really pretend to know even a smidgen about; and the only fundamental thing that I ever derived from it was that, in the theater, you communicate by implication.

In other media you communicate by statement; you communicate by mechanics. In the theater, to make an audience respond to what you are going to try to communicate, you have to put into execution a form of hypnosis. That's been a part of theater craft ever since we've had a theater in the western world. The Greeks knew that you had to hypnotize; and the critics of the theater in the days of its classic beginnings all recognized the mystery of audience surrender.

What makes an *audience* out of a thousand individuals, each of whom comes to the theater with a bunch of fixed ideas that run from opinions to convictions? We know that during the course of the play, if it holds them, they're probably going to be influenced. We don't know how, because presumably they don't know what the play is going to be about—what sort of a story it is going to be, or the technique of presentation. But we know that sooner or later, if the play is any good and the performance is any good, they are going to be fused out of their individual personalities into a mass personality—into that amazing thing we call an audience.

But for this to happen, some kind of true recognition of the nature of the whole communication must be made by all who are involved. I remember many years ago when Dennis Johnston played *Moon on the Yellow River*—a play about the arrival of industry in an Irish village, and the protests of people who were not prepared for the acceptance of a mechanical age. Onto the stage came a character played by a very good actor, Barry McCullum, who is an original Abbey player. He walked on the stage with the most absurd pair of trousers that anybody had ever seen. They were the most grotesque looking things. They'd never been on human legs, and the like of them had never been seen by anybody sitting in front. And there was a laugh at the grotesque picture that he made; in about thirty seconds the audience began to feel, began to realize, through perception, that those trousers were the only trousers that that character could possibly wear. Who told them the pants were authentic? Nothing told them, except the subtlety of the communication of the actor and the producer and the director and the

costume-maker—and the cooperation of the audience. It was the hunger, the appetite, the *willingness to accept*.

I think communication is a two-way job. The one who communicates has to be sure he has something besides a stone wall to throw his communication to. And that isn't very profound, but it certainly is one of the few things that I have learned about it. You've got to have somebody ready to accept if the communication has been made.

*Mr. Gregory:* And there has to be a certain quality in the whole make-up of the communicator. I think the kind of communication that reaches me comes from someone who begins honestly. I always used a certain kind of rent-a-car service—until the first time I saw the ad for Avis, which says "We're Number Two!" I think this reached me because of its honesty. Every man has to admit to himself sometime in life that *he* is "Number Two"; but he hates to admit it, and would fight to the death to deny it.

But if real communication takes place, the person who is communicating has to know himself; and knowing himself, he can communicate much better. Abraham Lincoln could communicate with great power, but there were certain factors involved in that power. For one thing, it took a certain blood-track down through the years to produce a man so ugly that he was beautiful. And he knew the way to frame a communication that would make people respond. He could have said: "I've never owned a slave, and I don't feel that you should either," but he didn't put it that way. Instead, he said, "I would never be a slave, therefore, I would never be a master." It sounds better to the ear and no one is accused.

But if it is a part of man's basic nature to respond to communication when he feels great sympathy for someone, he will also bear a certain amount of added resentment if the communication disappoints him. If you give a blind man a dollar out of pity, and then he says something which aggravates you, your reaction against him is that much stronger.

*Mr. Smith:* I would like to speak about communications—with an "s"—as a process we are studying in the social and behavioral sciences. We would define communications as the interaction between human beings who have—because of the way they have been enculturated and socialized—shared in common basic attitudes and assumptions that are the same. There must be a sharing of basic attitudes and assumptions, and a whole lot of other things, before

communication—which is basically interaction between individual and individual, between individual and group, between group and group—can occur.

At times we are likely to think that basic attitudes and assumptions and ideals that we hold, or wish we held, are shared by all right-thinking people. “Right-thinking” is a very important term here because, as communicators and as human beings, we think first and then we talk—or whatever else we do in the interaction or communication process. As a linguistic scientist and anthropologist, I would like to say that one of the reasons why we think the thoughts we do is because we speak the kind of language we speak—which, itself, is a cultural system. As a man talks, the kind of language he uses is going to have a lot to do with the way he thinks. We cannot assume that we are going to think the same thoughts that Chinese think, by virtue of the fact that the Chinese language handles experience differently than English does. Consequently, I’d like to direct this discussion to communication as a basic interaction process between people who have their computers inside their skulls, and perhaps their hearts, programmed by the same kinds of values, attitudes, and assumptions. Where those are not shared universally, communication is bound to break down.

*Mr. Tooke:* Does this work only with language, or does it apply in every way that man communicates?

*Mr. Smith:* I think it applies in every way, except that I want to direct it to language as a cultural system first because language is the difference between man and all other forms of life on this earth. That is man’s power—an invention of the symbol. I’m speaking of this amazing symbol system—these noises we make with our faces that are patterned and structured and arbitrary, and yet allow all the rest of our way of life to come into being. Without it, there is nothing.

*Mr. Tooke:* Steve, you have a lot of things to say. You do this with music and writing and poetry and lyrics and entertaining and playing music. Why do you find that necessary?

*Mr. Allen:* I’ll be damned if I know. I have some theories of why I do that, but I think they’re all *post facto* rationalizations. That does not mean that they are not very valuable as ideas. Not all rationalization is nonsense.

One of the reasons that I speak through many different masks is that I speak to different audiences. There may be millions of people who have, at one time or another, watched me on television; but only about seven thousand people read my book of poetry, and only about fifteen thousand people bought my novel. And I'm sure these three audiences, although there was some overlapping, were essentially distinct. I think that having a greater number of audiences lets me communicate better. As a poet or novelist, for example, I sense that mankind is in mortal danger. Then, as a comedian and as a musician, I offer opiate to deaden the pain of that realization. But I'm not content to stop there as a human being. The insight still nags at me and drives me to write and to speak. I have been told that I could perhaps make some of my points better if I used the weapon or medium of humor to make them; but again, I don't know why I don't always do it that way. It's very easy to make a point with a satirical sketch or a timely joke. And I'm not knocking that. I think Dick Gregory is making a valuable contribution to our society by jokes which, in eight or ten words, can sometimes say more than an entire essay. I sometimes attempt to do that myself.

But I also feel obliged, or compelled, to speak—sometimes at considerable length and with considerable fervor—about subject matters which don't ordinarily lend themselves to inclusion into my television program. My television audience isn't really terribly interested in the fact that I think men ought to stop killing each other and, therefore, that I'm opposed to capital punishment. I write magazine articles about that subject. I include it in books. I make speeches about it and I permit myself to be interviewed on television about it. I think there is no reason why any of these areas should exclude the other.

*Mr. Dann:* I'd like to ask whether or not all of you think that—with the advent of mass communications in all forms and the growth of the theaters and movies and all other art forms—man is making real progress. Are communicators or communications making a contribution today in this country? With all the techniques we've learned, are we helping man to move forward in a real sense? Is he living a more fruitful, productive life as a human being? Are we making other people live better lives in a democratic framework?

*Mr. Smith:* I would say, without any question, that there is great progress. For one thing, there is a change in the way I think people look at each other. And, after all, change is progress. More people

know more about more people; and because I am an incurable optimist, I think more people care more about more people.

*Mr. Dann:* And this is all a result of communications?

*Mr. Smith:* Well, I wouldn't say it's all a result of it. I'd say that the amount of information that the mass media—all of them—have brought into this society of ours today is helping.

*Mr. Dann:* But is it all a result of communications? It can't be from the solar system. It has to be from learning it some place.

*Mr. Smith:* Yes, but whatever you say about the mass media and their failures, they have been tremendously important. In fact, I can think of no one single force which bears as heavily on the ordinary individual.

*Mr. Tooke:* Bob, do you think that the communicators of this country are behind the audiences, or ahead of them; or are we about even? And wherever we are, is that where we ought to be?

*Mr. Shayon:* I wish I knew the answer. The question of whether we are making progress or not demands a criterion of judgment. How do you know what we come from? We don't know too much about communications a hundred years ago or two hundred years ago. Our information is sketchy. We can only guess whether we are getting better or worse because we don't know where we are in the spectrum. My own guess is that we are failing—miserably. I think not only the communications systems in this country are failing, but I think they are failing wherever you have the technological urban-patterned society that is rapidly developing in a homogeneous world culture.

This includes all the mass media, and I think the evidences of that failure lie in such social indicators as juvenile delinquency and divorce rates. The people are miserable, and I think that this is a communications problem; it's a communications problem because communications is not about sending a message about a world that exists out there. Communication is the actual sending of the message and living it itself. I think we have a tremendous contradiction in our world today, where on the one hand we have the superficial appearance of technological material progress, and underneath we have tremendous tensions. I don't know whether these are evidences of going backwards or forward. I know these contradictions exist, and I know they break out in ugly, irrational spells around the world.

To me, the challenge of communications is whether we can ameliorate that irrationality and ugliness. And I see the mass media of communications as being used not primarily to address itself to these problems, but to the spreading of the gospel of the priesthood of comfort, which is advertising. I think communications can change the patterns that we have in the world in which we live. That's my hope for it.

*Mr. Smith:* I'm not going to argue that the world has tension. I think that when you've got a world that is shrinking and divided as this world is, and fragmented as this world is, you're bound to have tension. One of the things that has made the world shrink has been the technological progress in communications. But you're saying that, primarily, you think the media are failing because they follow the priesthood of comfort. I'm saying that, by the very virtue of the fact that more people are learning more about more people and are *caring*, this is hope. No one can say that there isn't tension and that the job is a perfect job. It's a terrible job when you look at some of it.

*Mr. Connelly:* I don't think the theory of comfort is in itself an awful one. I think it's awful when the pressures—the comfort argument, the comfort persuasion—apply only to physical things. Psychologically, using comfort as a device as part of the mechanics of communication is a very astute one because those offering comfort know damn well that the reader, the listener, the viewer, *does* want comfort. I think what is wrong is that it has limited itself so much to the physical.

Man probably was never so charged with inquiry as he is today. The child used to be regarded as a healthy child in proportion to the number of questions he asked. The fact that he had curiosity indicated a potential that was very encouraging—certainly to the psychologist. Man today, by being hammered—almost anesthetized—by the comfort division of communication, is being stultified into suppressing inquiry in other areas—inquiries that would help his disturbed condition. Here, we are in a world where formal religion—where orthodoxies—are being increasingly rejected by individuals. And we're not trying through our communications in the mass media to stimulate and give a comfort that has nothing whatever to do with the satisfaction of a particular kind of car or an electric blanket or a toothbrush. If the comfort theme could be widened, and take in many more things than the purely material existence, I

think communications would become almost automatically sharper, clearer, and more welcome in exchanges between human beings.

*Mr. Tooke:* Who has to take the first step here—the communicator or the person listening?

*Mr. Connelly:* I think if people will recognize the hunger is there and see exactly what that hunger consists of—what its ramifications and its subdivisions are—then there can be special catering to that kind of hunger. But some generosity, some true philanthropy, has to enter the employment of these magical devices. They haven't yet been employed for the actual—the basic—needs of man. They've only been employed to take care of very ephemeral things. And that is the thing that distresses me more than anything else, I think, about modern mass communication.

*Mr. Shayon:* I'd like to relate a key word that Marc used—"hunger"—to Dick Gregory's response to the Avis ad. In communication we're always seeking the response from our audience that we ourselves enjoy. And I think Dick found that response because he enjoys honesty. I think man is a paradoxical creature. He has a hunger not only for honesty, but also for fantasy. Steve says he's many things at different times. Sometimes he constructs opiates for himself. All of us have the same need. My point is that in mass communication today there's a greater emphasis on the superficial aspects rather than the underlying and balancing appetites of the human spirits of dignity and honesty—and for an inquiring curiosity into the world revolution that's going on.

*Mr. Tooke:* You believe that the audience is ready and willing and able to take more of this than the communicators are now giving?

*Mr. Shayon:* I would be very happy to answer that with a flat "Yes." The honest answer is that I don't know.

*Mr. Dann:* As a program executive, I look for signals from the public to move forward. Yet I also think the responsibility of leadership is leadership. I don't think that the common denominator or the average man is to be watched for a flare to move ahead. He has to see the flare. I do think there has been a phenomenal growth in the coverage of our cultural problems on programs like *East Side/West Side*, *The Defenders* and *The Nurses*, which are meeting the issues head-on. I would like to suggest to you that those kinds of stories never existed in the whole history of radio. The television dramatic form is growing up much quicker compared to the days

of the *Lux Radio Theatre*, and in a fashion I would never have predicted two or three years ago. I think this is a move away from the western, and away from the action story form, and away from panel and variety shows—not that any of those are evils, but there are signs of a dramatic way of treating real world problems to a degree that I never thought the mass majority of the public would accept. I think in that respect they have seen the light. Now are there enough of those programs on the air? No. Are they done well enough? No. Do they deal enough of the issues? No. Should we do more? Yes. But I think you have to recognize what has been done, or we won't continue to move in the right direction.

*Mr. Tooke:* Now let me ask each one of you to take a couple of minutes to talk to your colleagues in broadcasting. We must agree that responsibility increases with capacity, and should be demanded of those in positions of power. Leo Rosten has written that he holds the intellectual more responsible than others for the rigorous exploration of phenomena, and the courageous enunciation of truths. And therefore he asks for still better performance from those who have the awesome power to shake men's minds. Let me give each one of you an opportunity to respond to that request.

*Mr. Dann:* I think that it is not by chance that God or some other spiritual force has given us this powerful communication tool. Namely, broadcasting, and particularly, television. It comes at a time when the world needs it most. I believe that broadcasting can be the deciding factor in whether man moves forward, perhaps even survives. And I think that radio and TV have to assume the responsibility for trying to satisfy this need within the existing industry structure. The great successes in all of the entertainment world have come from the producer who has pointed *up* rather than *down*. The *Rodgerses* and *Hammersteins* of Broadway, Mr. Connelly and Mr. Goldwyn in the movies, and countless others who always assume that man knows a little more than we think. With this assumption, I think that communicators will move toward the goal we all want.

*Mr. Shayon:* Well, on the corporate agenda of every large corporation in this country, there is a checklist of items that go into the making of corporate decisions. And on this checklist you will find cost, profit, public relations, and so forth; but broadcasters are not alone in having a glaring gap of omission on their corporate checklist, and that, if you'll pardon a classical expression, is the word

"ethics." I think that we must learn to ask ourselves about the ethics of the decisions we make. And I suggest to you that the principle be not the ethics of "I am right, I know the answer" and "I will think up a piece of communications which will make the other fellow agree with me and do what I want him to do," but to take as your cardinal principle of operation the ethics of mutual involvement, which is that broadcasters and the fellow on the other side of the camera and microphones are partners in a human and divine situation. Both are in the same boat, and what they need is not to talk each other into their own point of view, but to achieve a commonality of viewpoints.

*Mr. Allen:* As I've already indicated, and as the proverbial six-year-old child can plainly see, civilization is in mortal danger. The concept of democracy is under attack, not only from the Marxist camp, but from extremists on our own right. The successful functioning of democracy, again as we all know, requires an informed electorate, informed both factually and morally. And whether by specific divine intervention or not, television does exist, and it is the most exciting, informational and educational device ever developed. But it seems to me that its potential has not yet been realized. I feel broadcasters *know* what to do about that. I'm glad they do, and I'm confident they'll do it.

*Mr. Smith:* Perhaps this is one of the things that Bob Shayon is talking about that we haven't grasped. We haven't reached far enough in these media yet. I think if we could understand the differences between ourselves and others—and I don't mean just between us and the Russians and Chinese; I mean right here in this room—if we could understand differences, I think we would get something that perhaps you can call knowledge. Now in my particular profession, what we are trying to do is push back the frontiers of ignorance in any one of a number of fields. The only way you can get at knowledge is to work in a community. And broadcasters constitute a community of this large culture of ours; and yet they represent, uniquely, all of the people in a larger community. I think, therefore, that if we can get to knowledge—true understanding with compassion—we might be able to know some of the questions to ask, and leave the answers to take care of themselves.

*Mr. Gregory:* I would say the broadcaster holds the shotgun in his hand when he's communicating, mainly because he is a part of the

audience more than he is a communicator. That is his first strength. Next, he has the force—the power of the wires strung over the whole world. Then, he has the tools of persuasion. His cameras and microphones are mightier than the pen. He can bend the straw, and all he needs to do it is Truth. With truth, force, and persuasion he can save this country.

*Mr. Connelly:* I think that the business and the life of the person whose job, whose daily existence, has to do with communication must be guided by the distinction between technique and motivation. I think the great danger for any man who has a daily obligation is that, despite the possibilities, he is still limited in a mechanical sense. He is liable to give in to fashionability—is liable to depend on that which has proved only an ephemeral validity. He's got to be afraid of that. He's got to be afraid of being captured by success, by his own success. He has to always say: The technical achievement is fine, but what the hell am I doing to justify my working with that technique? Am I going to be able to pay dues in the human race by what I try to organize and express through these certainties of technique? I think his own inquiry must be constantly at work, but I think, as a matter of fact, that inquiry is at work. So I'm not doing anything really, except saying "God bless him."

*Mr. Tooke:* Let me paraphrase, just for a moment, some remarks that were made recently by Mr. William Nichols, the editor-in-chief of *This Week Magazine*. He was talking to a group of newspaper editors, but his comment applies just as well to broadcasters. A couple of years ago, the then-president of the New York Academy of Sciences told an audience of scientists that a world re-altered by automation and an abundance of cheap nuclear energy would bring about a class of leisure-stricken individuals who would replace the poverty-stricken. He foresaw millions of downgraded skilled workers beset by boredom, and he believed that resources of entertainment will be what he calls "grievously insufficient" to accommodate the needs of a growing number of these leisure-stricken people.

And in the Rockefeller Report on Education, there is the statement that what most people, young or old, want is not merely security or comfort or luxury, although they're glad enough to have these; they want meaning in their lives.

Perhaps, in summary, this is what we have been talking about. Perhaps our challenge now is to see if we can't recognize the fact

that the public as a whole is hungry for some form of leadership, of inspiration, and guidance which will help fill the vacuum of this leisure-stricken age and give a sense of purpose and direction in a time when too many people feel leaderless and rudderless. Can't we, as broadcasters, as communicators, give people a renewed sense of meaning and purpose?

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"The revolt of the masses" (using Ortega's terms) is a matter of the past 75 years, at the most, perhaps of the past 50. For a mass society, you go back to 1900. When the number of hours most men worked a week was 58, 60, *the society did not exist*. A mass society, industrial society, democratically organized, is one in which a whole series of things are going to come down before they go up. Education is going to be weakened; taste is going to be weakened; this is perfectly natural. But that is no reason for general pessimism. The thing that must happen in that society is the cultivation of that mass. I do not believe that mankind, taking them per capita, has so far in the history of the race used more than a quarter of its intelligence. The one untapped resource is the human mind. We have split the atom for energy. But the tremendous energy latent in the weakest intelligence—the 85 I.Q.—has many times more intelligence than we have begun to use. When you get the masses of mankind with all that intelligence really operating, you cannot imagine what the future may hold.

Mortimer J. Adler  
*Journalism Quarterly*

If the local broadcaster maintains contacts which are both wide and deep in the community—if he engages in an honest give-and-take with community leaders, and if he demonstrates a bona fide effort to serve the community—the job of the FCC will be much easier.

**E. William Henry**

*Chairman, FCC  
at the Cleveland Conference*

I'm really thankful for the Chicago hearings of the FCC into community needs. Out of them came our show "The First Freedom," and it has been so successful commercially that we have almost recovered the cost of those damned hearings out of it.

**Sterling "Red" Quinlan**

*WBKB TV, Chicago  
at the Cleveland Conference*

## THE MEANING OF CULTURE

It has often been said that cultural affairs have never before been so widely discussed. And this is so: they are discussed the world over. But what does this mean? It means, first of all, that a certain phenomenon has appeared: that of the survival of works of art.

Whereas previous civilizations had dismissed the Past altogether the Renaissance kept the Black Madonnas because they were regarded as venerable, not because they were regarded as admirable. The notion of immortality was born in the sixteenth century.

We have discovered, in a civilization which is not a religious civilization, that whereas we have nothing left of an Alexander or a Caesar except a name, there subsists in a statue of Alexander or of Caesar something that speaks to us, and whereas we know nothing about what the cave men were, a few bisons they painted speak to us as on the first day.

I said here on this platform, a few years ago, "the substance of culture is what, in death, nonetheless belongs to life" and to illustrate what I mean, we have a very ordinary example no one ever thinks of, though the vocabulary is the same: this is the religious phenomenon.

It is evident that for a Christian, Christ is not a man of a specific period, he is alive. For a Buddhist, Buddha is not a sage of a specific period, he is present. For all the great religions, the prophet is present.

Now the work of art, too, is present in its way, and its fundamental characteristic is this mysterious survival. . . .

For many years, all over the world, it has been assumed that the problem of culture was a problem of the administration of leisure. It is high time we realized that these two elements are profoundly distinct, and that one is merely the means to the other. Of course an automobile is always an automobile. But when it takes you where you want to go it is not the same thing as when it takes you over a cliff.

There would be no culture if there were not leisure. But it is not leisure that makes culture: it is leisure which is the means to culture.

Here begins our real problem which is: what are we defending together?

During the years between the creation of a Ministry of Leisure and the present, there have appeared in the world the great dream techniques—I refer of course to the cinema, to television, etc., not insofar as they are political means or means of propaganda, but quite precisely insofar as they are means of fiction. People always talk of the supremacy of machines, but forget that a century ago in Paris, 3,000 Parisians went to the theater every night. Today the number of Parisians who enter the world of fiction every night must be around three and a half million.

Machines have infinitely less influence upon the earth and upon action than the dream machines upon our minds. Yet the dream machines, which were not invented for the pleasure of men but merely to make money for those who manufacture them, have a supreme power only insofar as within ourselves—I am speaking bluntly—they make the most money, only insofar as they appeal, in us, to what is least human, most animal, most organic: in other words, sex and death.

If we permit this enormous power, which is only beginning to be manifest, to act without opposition upon the world, once and for all, with its own means, then it is simply all up with what we call civilization.

It is not apparent that these machines are bad in advance—they are multipliers, they are the multipliers of their own multiplicand. It is certainly not a bad thing that a man like Chaplin made the whole world laugh. But consider how special the problem of the comic is. In the success of comedy, there is no dramatic element. What is comic can cover the world.

It is with what I have called the realm of sex and of blood that the problem begins. It is not bad in itself that a film of *Anna Karenina* made by a Swedish actress and an American director made audiences cry from the Urals to the Pacific. But we must realize that, in this case, the film refers back to one of the world's greatest writers.

Thus unprecedentedly powerful means of action are appearing in the world, and confronting them, for the spiritual defense of humanity, there is a single reality as profound as these fundamental emotions I have mentioned, and this is the realm to defend, this is what, by definition, has resisted death.

It is obvious that Greek tragedy might be nothing more than a matter of gouged eyes—but it is more because there is the moment when Antigone says: "I have not come to share in hatred, but to share in love." There are immortal words, and it is only immortal words that are as powerful as the powers of darkness.

That, ladies and gentlemen, is essentially the axis of our undertaking. From the university level down to places that are today quite defenseless, within thirty years—for it does not proceed rapidly—any human being must have the means to defend himself, and we must afford him those means, for if we do not, no one else will.

*André Malraux*

*Minister of State in Charge of Culture  
before the French National Assembly  
November 9, 1963.*

After his early days in radio, **E. G. Marshall** performed with a Shakespeare company in 1933, then moved with it to Chicago's Federal Theatre. On Broadway he appeared in such plays as *The Iceman Cometh*, *Waiting for Godot* and *The Crucible*. Mr. Marshall's numerous motion pictures include *The Caine Mutiny* and *Compulsion*. For his contribution to *The Defenders* he received an *Emmy* in 1963 for "outstanding continued performance by an actor in a series."

**George C. Scott** began his acting career in a University of Missouri Workshop production of *The Winslow Boy*. He later appeared in roles for the New York City Shakespeare Festival, and in *Children of Darkness*, for which he received the Clarence Derwent Award and the Vernon Rice Off-Broadway Award. Mr. Scott's motion pictures include *Anatomy of a Murder* and *The Hustler*; for television he appeared in *The Power and the Glory* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. He is currently seen in *East Side/West Side*.

# THE CREATORS:

## *A DIALOGUE*

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E. G. MARSHALL  
GEORGE C. SCOTT

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*In December, Television Quarterly met with actors E. G. Marshall and George C. Scott in the Academy New York offices to engage in the following dialogue.*

*Interviewer:* We might begin by reflecting upon some of Tyrone Guthrie's opinions about acting for television, made originally in *The Eighth Art* and reprinted in an earlier issue of the *Quarterly*. "As to acting," he wrote:

When, in order to protect the right image on TV, every politician is taking lessons in make-up; every ecclesiastic practicing saintly faces before the looking glass when royalty, presidents and multi-millionaires bone up on folksy ways and nice homely expressions so as to woo the Common Man by creating themselves anew in his image; when everyone, literally everyone, believes that by adding a cubit to his stature he can become a television personality, what, you may ask, is a poor actor to do? If he has a real talent for acting and takes enough trouble to develop a technique, there will always be a demand for his services. But not in TV; in the theatre. More and more, television acting will be reserved for the amateurs—queens being crowned, cardinals losing their specs and politicians wooing the electorate in Nebraska.

How does that strike you, gentlemen?

*Mr. Marshall:* I would say, first of all, that when you put the work of any actor into thirty million homes, you are also adding a cubit

to *his* stature. I don't think I'm being deprived of an opportunity to act by not being on Broadway.

I would agree with Mr. Guthrie to a point. The immediate reality of life is the most interesting aspect of television. A little girl falls from a bicycle or a President is assassinated, and the immediate quality of it is what television carries. I have great admiration for Mr. Guthrie. He's the finest director we have, but he has never done anything in the medium, and cannot appreciate the fact of it moving into the home. It is not a theatre, not a stage, but it is still a natural home for the actor.

*Mr. Scott:* You have to define the kind of acting you're talking about. It's a diversified thing and matters of technique are varied. They vary for the motion picture, vary for television, and vary within the contexts of television. The actor on a series faces distinct problems from the actor in a single production.

*Mr. Marshall:* On the stage you must say, as a performer, "Here I am. Now watch *me*." In television you don't have to do that, because if the director is alert he knows where the story is being told.

*Mr. Scott:* It is a medium in which, like motion pictures, the actor is least in command. Someone may have decided to put the camera elsewhere at the moment an actor decided to command attention.

*Mr. Marshall:* And the actor must follow the writer, in some ways. Some of the things I have seen brought from the stage to TV have been marred by an artificial quality in the writing. It may have worked for the stage, but in TV it seemed unrelated.

*Interviewer:* Is this a reflection of what Guthrie has suggested? The two series in which you appear are literally chained to the everyday circumstances of reality. Isn't the essential theatricality of it missing?

*Mr. Marshall:* Perhaps. Acting is supposed to be the recreating of life, and I don't know whether we can really recreate life unless we are involved in a total documentary style.

*Interviewer:* Are *The Defenders* and *East Side/West Side* closer to documentary than to drama? In the sense that they deal with real social issues, and—in the larger sense, for the actor—that Robert Shayon suggested when he pointed out that it is difficult to see a social worker passing through the irreversible crises of true drama?

*Mr. Marshall:* That's what we are trying to do, I think, whether we admit it or not.

*Mr. Scott:* I don't think so. E. G. may know the pitfalls better than I do, because he's been with it longer. But we're still trying to create a theatrical situation—sometimes against overwhelming odds. Perhaps this is faulty. But to duplicate reportage or documentary is not my work at all. If I were to do that I would go to work for CBS News, and learn Walter Cronkite's profession.

*Mr. Marshall:* Of course we're still actors. But something has changed. In the "Golden Age" we were trying to put on plays, and I think that what we're trying to do now is put life itself on the screen. We work with things that have really occurred. We heighten, we accent and underline them, but we're no longer trying to do Ibsen. When we do Ibsen, it's a special event, but when we do "Who Do You Kill?" this is something that is happening. It's not life, but it's a terribly close reflection of life.

*Mr. Scott:* To me, it goes without saying that the very thing we must not do is try to recreate a photographic image. We can't do what is done on the evening news program, because it's done so much better there. They do it in the proximity of time.

*Mr. Marshall:* They can't do what we do because they cannot follow a person from breakfast to dinner. They can only say what *happened* this morning and what *happened* at dinner, but we hold the mirror to life.

*Mr. Scott:* And to do it we must employ the devices of the acting profession. We are in a theatrical—I return to that word—a *theatrical* process which cannot be denied, no matter how involved it is with the life around us.

*Mr. Marshall:* Yes, I see that. We're involved in art, but an editorial is also artificial in that sense. It's not reportage—it's art. In the "small a" of art, perhaps we're closer to the editorial than the reporting of events. Was it Otto Preminger who said that all of the elements of high drama were present when Ruby shot Oswald?

*Mr. Scott:* But to make a drama of it, you would have to find an actor to play each of them. They would have two points of view about their roles, and all of the things that structure life into dramatic art. And the minute you did that you would be in the theatrical art. That's why the whole thing in the Dallas jail looked like a badly-staged *Circle Theatre*.

*Interviewer:* Can we turn from the relationships between the actor and the real person and consider your attitudes toward working in a series? Many critics and practitioners would say that this is the least satisfying kind of drama. Writers, directors, and actors have protested the limitations of it. As performers, do you find the routine difficult? Are you restricted in what you can bring to a character in terms of growth and new insights?

*Mr. Marshall:* Not at all. I'm not certain that characters do grow, in that sense. You can see new things that you want to reveal, as I do in the law. You get wrapped up in the subject, but not the character, and a little knowledge is a helpful thing. But you're only bringing yourself to it. How much can a man really develop in six months or a year? He may give up smoking, or learn to dance, but essentially he changes very little, and therefore there is not that much development in a series character. You don't deepen as you would in *Hamlet*, where the lightning flash may strike and you see new things suddenly. The only deepening that happens in a series is that your knowledge of the subject—whether it be law or social work or anything else—becomes broader.

*Mr. Scott:* I agree that it has never been done properly in a series. But I think it can be done, and—he said shyly—this is what we are intending to do.

*Mr. Marshall:* I'll await with great interest to see what happens to the character of Brock. But I think you'll stay the same. How are you going to change?

*Mr. Scott:* It takes a lot of jockeying with people who make it their business to stand in your way. But it can, and should, be done.

*Mr. Marshall:* Let's reduce it to a simple—maybe absurd—level. You're playing a mechanic, and so first you start off with lawnmowers, and you work your way up to Rolls Royces, but how else have you changed?

*Mr. Scott:* You're not the same man you were three years ago. Nobody is the same person he was even six months ago. The essence of life is change. That may sound pretentious, but it's true. I said once that I didn't want to be the same old Matt Dillon drawing the same old gun in episode 91 as I was in episode one.

*Mr. Marshall:* But if you're confronted with the same problems how will you change as a character? Maybe you'll draw a little faster or a little slower, but you still draw and you still shoot.

*Mr. Scott:* It has nothing to do with the character as written. The essence of the change will lie in the man himself. He must change, or else it's not really theatrical. There must be some obvious and recognizable evolution.

*Mr. Marshall:* He can only become *more* or *less* what he was in the first place. . . . He'll learn more about how he feels when he's subjected to different stimuli. He'll learn how he reacts to them. But nothing more.

*Mr. Scott:* When I first went into this thing I spoke of a novelistic concept of character development within the framework of a series. You can pick up any novel—good or bad—and you find a leading character at the outset. Then things happen to him. People happen to him—things and events which change and alter his life. He becomes someone else. This change in him causes other chain-reactions, and by page 500 he emits different wave-lengths than he did on page twelve. Now this concept has been applied very little in series thinking. The sense of growth and continuity has never been developed in broadcast series at all—except, interestingly enough, in the old radio soap operas. This was what kept people interested. Of course, Ma Perkins was always Ma Perkins but there were little changes constantly. In *One Man's Family* the changes were fantastic. If you can do this with a person's whole personality, rather than in the external aspects of his life, you will have achieved something memorable—something worthwhile.

*Interviewer:* In an earlier discussion for the *Quarterly*, Paul Monash raised this same point. He had proposed, you may recall, a "vast novel on film" based on *The Young Lions*, and wanted to keep the main characters alive in the post-war era in order to explore their new problems. Monash said his plan would not work because of the "thinking in analogues" he found among those who produce series. By that he meant they could not avoid comparing it to conventional series like *Combat*. Now, if a writer-producer has difficulty in moving this idea forward, what chance has a performer?

*Mr. Scott:* He can't do it alone. But if he's very fortunate, he may work with a conceptual mind comparable to the novelist's. There are TV series produced by such minds. One of them is *The Defenders*. Reginald Rose has a strong generalized, basic concept of the situation, and he has been able to keep everything in line in order to assure a flow that moves along a continuity line which is growing. This is interesting—and it's good. Perhaps, as E. G.

suggests, the Prestons themselves have *not* grown, but there has been a conceptual guide in that series pointing the way toward growth, and all of us have seen series where this never happens—where everything goes to pieces.

*Mr. Marshall:* George's reasoning is beginning to take hold with me now. I think this may be happening in our series. When I first began working with Bob Reed, for example, I was apprehensive because he was young—and an unknown quantity to me. He was a little awkward at the outset and I worried about him. As a father—and as an actor. In one sense, the fictional, he was a young law-school graduate coming into practice with me, and so this made me nervous. And in the real sense, he was a raw young actor who might trip over furniture. And then I became more comfortable with him in *both* senses—as an actor, and as a character. There was a true development in a father-son relationship.

*Mr. Scott:* He should be given equal time here, E. G. As a matter of fact, he said the same thing about you. He said *you* were clumsy.

*Mr. Marshall:* Kidding aside—and I hope you're kidding—I still am not certain that this kind of character development is as deep as the kind you're proposing. I don't think that can really happen. You've got to go from the birth to the grave to tell the story as deeply as you see it, right? You're not going to do that in thirteen weeks—or a year.

*Mr. Scott:* You might do it in three years, though. Or five. Matt Dillon certainly hasn't done it, and he's been on the air for six! I don't mean to be so obnoxious about poor old Matt. I make enemies doing that. A little old lady buttonholed me one day and said, "You sure are obnoxious. How do you get the right to knock Jim Arness and Dennis Weaver? You know they're going to replace Dennis and they're never going to get anyone as *lovely*." I said, "You're right, Madam, they're not!"

*Mr. Marshall:* Did she ask you *how* you remembered *all* your lines?

*Mr. Scott:* No. She asked me if my make-up hurt.

*Interviewer:* Why do you feel that character can grow in your kind of series in a way it has been unable to grow in westerns?

*Mr. Marshall:* Now that I've come halfway toward accepting George's position, I would say it is because we are involved with the people who come through our series—with the characters who

bring their own stories and situations with them. We must get involved with clients, and we must relate to them. Matt Dillon is the only kind of dramatic character on TV whose simple function is to see that simple justice is done, and if he doesn't have to get off his horse so much the better. It's quick and it's clean and there are no loose ends.

*Interviewer:* Does this move the argument, then, away from the theatrical and toward the dramatic? Is the western hero simply operating in that simple classic form which forces its own one-way resolution as an inevitable either-or? Are you involved in the kind of immediacies of life where resolutions are being rewritten daily in the newspapers?

*Mr. Marshall:* I think that may be the key distinction so far as the development and freedom of range in character is concerned. Matt Dillon says, "He broke the law, and therefore he's got to be brought to justice"; but he can't stop to say, "The law has been broken, but who brought about this situation? What are the conditions that prompted it? Where did it begin and where will it end?" These are the kind of loose endings we face.

*Interviewer:* Would you say, then, that you are social instruments as much as you are performers?

*Mr. Marshall:* You come to sense that. We were banned in Boston for the show we did on abortion, and a month or so after that program *Time Magazine* proposed the same solution—largely that we begin to make a full-scale inquiry into this problem. This is how entertainment serves a function. I don't know how many people subscribe to *Time*, but I know that millions who do not saw our show. It gives you a sense of accomplishment. Your interest increases and so does your involvement. Being in a series like *The Defenders* or *East Side/West Side* is simply not like going to the theatre every night at eight, saying hello, putting your make-up on, and performing until the curtain goes down and it's over. In TV it doesn't end. You are a part of something. There is a continuum which does not exist in the theatre.

I go out and give speeches to Law associations and similar groups. All of the history of the actor as a mountebank, a social outcast and an undesirable—all of the past when an actor was outside the pale—is gone. I'm a member of the community now.

*Mr. Scott:* Precisely. You cannot deal with everyday existence and be removed from it. In social work you are directly involved with

American life, and the actor becomes involved in the same way. It is a battle that never ends, like Oceania fighting Eurasia in *1984*. Sure, social workers have individual successes at times, but you can't end a play about a social work project like you can end a western, and you can't react *as a character* in any cut-and-dried way. How much do you want to indicate—through your characterization—the overall success or failure of social work as a whole, of society as a whole, of progress at any level of human existence? How much do you want to say? How good is life? How far have we come? Where are we going? If the character of Neil Brock solves this problem one week and another problem the following week, and nine times out of ten comes out smelling like a rose—then the obvious implication is that *society* has come off smelling like a rose. The converse is true.

*Mr. Marshall:* You come to a railroad crossing and the sign says "Stop—Look—Listen." I think that's what we're trying to do on these shows. We arrest the attention. We point to the problem. We say, "This is something that we ought to consider—find some solution to. We are not finding it now. This woman is going to lose her child, this man is going to prison. We must consider their problems." That's all we can say. Let's think about it.

*Interviewer:* How does this approach square, then, with the question of dramatic structure? Is the classic sense of climax and resolution in drama simply passing away? How does this answer Robert Shayon's criticism of the character of Neil Brock—for example—which does not pass through some irreversible crisis? Is dramaturgy itself becoming something else?

*Mr. Marshall:* No. We are dealing with a particular kind of magnetic field here—a field which has continuity. That is the essence of this kind of series drama—time and continuity. As a result, as long as the options are renewed, you carry a different orientation to it. It is a series in which there are openings and closings, but not necessarily complete endings. There can't be, really. If you resolve the main character's problem once and for all some week, the series is over. But this doesn't mean there are no crises and resolutions each week.

*Mr. Scott:* If the classic idea of resolution is the goal, then at the end of some forecasted period there should be some true resolution of the central character. There can be change in this sense. Someday Brock will face this—death, total resignation, incapacity of

some kind, a totally new change in direction. But not every week. How in hell can you draw a resolution for the narcotics problem in an hour? It's just not possible. Brock and the Prestons can't resolve it this way. That's why the novelistic concept can mix with dramaturgical and both can still have validity. And that's why a character—at least the major character in a series—does not pass through an “irreversible crisis” every week. We are really talking about the longest drama in history.

*Mr. Marshall:* Like the great novels that detail whole decades—whole lifetimes. But for the major character to just drop out of things—well, that's not the point. It's not the point of a newspaper.

*Mr. Scott:* But the validity of dramatic characterization in the closed sense of a week-to-week crisis depends on the transient characters in our stories. We begin with them—with their problem specified—and we do resolve that. You recall the wonderful performance given by Don Gordon in a *Defenders* episode last year. He ended up going to the chair—as a result of his own tragic flaw. It was classic in that sense. You can't send one of the Prestons off like that. It would make a hell of a fine episode, but then you bump into the great generalized concept of character evolution you're trying to establish, and you've lost a particular audience.

*Interviewer:* The mention of audience brings us to that specialized audience within an audience with which you must deal directly—the representatives of the professions you are portraying. How have they responded?

*Mr. Marshall:* I'll yield to George on that one. The attorneys are working within a more rigid professional framework, and I've had very smooth relations with Bar Associations.

*Mr. Scott:* Well, the National Association of Social Workers monitors our programs, and they were asked to provide responses—and they provided responses. Many of them were appalled at some of our techniques and *modus operandi*, and many others were appalled at me as a prototype of a social worker. Hell, we tried patiently to explain to them that we were not making training films for social workers. I think the fact that I wear my tie loosened has shaken the very foundations of social work. I don't think they're wrong—but I don't think my attitude is unreasonable either. We're trying to draw attention to social work and its problems. But the letters—some of them—have been rough. “I am a case worker and I can't

see that my prototype is anything to rave about." And: "In addition to the program's total and gross misrepresentation of social work practice, I am also deeply concerned about the impact upon the public of the empty and ineffectual portrayal of the social worker. . . ."

*Mr. Marshall:* Ah-ha! Empty and ineffectual. . . ?

*Mr. Scott:* I said *some* of the letters. I've gotten others—letters that say "I'm a social worker," or "I'm a Dean of a School of Social Work," or "I train social workers," and all of these say "Cool it." They say, "You are no doubt getting fantastic opposition to what you are doing—but they'll get over it. You're doing much more good than harm." I get this kind of letter repeatedly and it makes you feel right about it.

*Mr. Marshall:* That's what we feel, I think, all the time. That we're close to this thing called life that's happening around us. And this makes it easy to push on.

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S C R E E N   G E M S   Inc.

# CHILDREN'S TELEVISION

## FAN MAIL\*

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CHARLES WINICK

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Several studies have called attention to the possible value of fan mail as a relatively accessible clue to public opinion about radio and television broadcasts.<sup>1</sup> The popularity of program rating services has led to an emphasis on the characteristics of the television audience rather than on the more qualitative data available from fan mail from viewers. However, the only large-scale study of the subject has suggested that the writers of fan mail to a television program may possess socio-economic characteristics similar to those of the total population of viewers of the program.<sup>2</sup> Such fan mail may provide clues to what viewers are thinking, in much the same way that the White House uses its mail from the general public as clues to matters that are of popular concern.

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The great interest in how children relate to television and the possibility that the mail written by children to a television network might be representative of some broad based children's attitudes toward the medium suggested the desirability of an analysis of such mail. This is a report on an analysis of all of the mail from children to NBC over a three-month period during 1962. It does *not* include the mail in which parents wrote and mentioned their children's views or attitudes on television programs.

All the mail sent to the company was screened in order to identify mail from children of seventeen or less. Since children's mail looks like any other kind, it was necessary to establish explicit criteria for its identification. Such criteria were relatively easy to specify, and a total of 2,311 pieces of mail was turned over to the writer for analysis. The mail had previously been routed to whatever network department or program was best able to take action on it.

### *Description of the Mail*

Over three-fifths (61.5 per cent) of the mail was from girls, with 38.5 per cent from boys. The sex of each writer could be determined by his or her name, as well as by auxiliary characteristics of the handwriting in the relatively few cases where the first name was not given, or was only an initial. The greater incidence of communications from girls may reflect boys' greater participation in outdoor games activities.

Half (50.2 per cent) of the mail was written in pen, 27.6 per cent in pencil, and 22.2 per cent was typed. Half (50.5 per cent) was on notebook paper, 28.2 per cent on plain paper, 10.4 per cent on a postcard, 7.4 per cent on personalized stationery, and 3.1 per cent on school paper. The relatively formal nature of the appearance of these communications suggests that the writers devoted considerable attention to their preparation, although this writing is somewhat less formal than typical adult mail to a network.

Communications of less than 25 words accounted for 33 per cent of the mail. Those with 25-50 words represented 45.6 per cent, while 13.2 per cent wrote 50-75 words. Communications of 75-100 words constituted 2.8 per cent of the total, with 3 per cent writing 100-150 words, 1 per cent 150-200 words, and 2 per cent with over 200 words. The typical letter is therefore fairly long and contains a number of comments.

The level of spelling could be rated by comparison with the spelling norms for each age. Over a third (37.6 per cent) was excellent, with 31.4 per cent very good, 21 per cent good, and 9 per

cent fair, with 2 per cent poor. In the excerpts from the letters, quoted below, spelling errors have been corrected. The level of spelling performance is high, suggesting that the task of preparing a communication was undertaken with a high degree of interest and attentiveness. The level is much higher than typical adult fan mail.

In a third of the letters the writers gave their ages. In most of the others it was possible to establish the age of the writer by some combination of content and handwriting. One per cent of the writers were under 5, 3 per cent were 6, and 8.6 per cent were 7. Eight-year-olds accounted for 5.8 per cent, 7.3 per cent were 9 years old, and 17.5 per cent were 10 years old. There were 14 per cent who were 11 years old and the same number of 12-year-olds. Fifteen per cent were 13 years old, 5.6 were 14, and 3 per cent were 15–17 years old. The wide distribution of ages suggests that all elements of the child audience are represented among the writers, and that young people do not stop either viewing or writing at any cutoff age. Once a child starts viewing, his doing so is likely to continue until there is a change in his life situation.<sup>3</sup>

The great majority (93 per cent) of the letters were from individuals and were clearly self-generated. Four per cent seemed to have been written in response to some group stimulus other than a school, while 3 per cent seemed to be related to a school situation, like a class assignment. It is possible that there are proportionately more self-generated and non-group inspired letters from children than are found in samples of adult mail, which is surprising in view of children's traditional concern about the opinions of their peers. The children who write would seem to be writing their own thoughts.

The smaller communities account for a very substantial proportion of the children who write, perhaps because those growing up in small towns are more individualistic and have considerable feeling about the importance of their opinions. Communities of less than 25,000 are represented in 32 per cent of the children's mail, while 30.2 per cent comes from cities of 25,000–100,000. The 100,000–500,000 category accounts for 17 per cent, while cities of half a million to one million sent 7.3 per cent and those of over a million were the source of 13.5 per cent.

Most of the letters were fairly decorous and formal. Thus, 81.6 per cent used a conventional salutation, 4 per cent used a relatively familiar salutation (Dear Friend), and 3 per cent used an unusual or breezy salutation (Dear TV Man). Some (12.4 per cent) used no

salutation, but began with the text of the communication. The few communications with whimsical salutations were roughly of two kinds: very sophisticated and very naive.

Almost four-fifths (79.6 per cent) of the writers referred to a specific program. Of these, 21 per cent were animal programs, 17.7 per cent westerns, and 16 per cent were news and current events. Thirteen per cent were programs specifically intended for young children, like animations. Detective and mystery formats accounted for 11.4 per cent of the mail, with comedy represented by 5.1 per cent of the writers. Science programs drew 4.8 per cent of the mail, with historical materials accounting for 3.3 per cent. These proportions are very congruent with what is known about the relative interest in various program types on the part of young people, and suggest that young viewers are writing letters about programs at a rate that is roughly proportionate to their viewing such programs.

It was possible to cross-tabulate the programs cited by the age of the person writing about the program, in order to determine whether particular age groups tended to write about specific programs. Writing about animal programs tended to be dispersed over all age groups, as did mail about comedy. Current events programs primarily elicited correspondence from children of 13 through 17. Historical material primarily drew mail from youngsters of 10 and 11, as did scientific programs. Westerns appealed to all age groups. In general, there is almost complete consonance between the subject matter of the mail and what is known about the interests of young people at each age group.<sup>4</sup> Children who write about programs generally are thus commenting on the kind of program that is most salient to them.

The proportion of favorable letters (87.8 per cent) far outweighed the negative letters (12.2 per cent), although many letters are difficult to classify on an either-or basis. Even the favorable letters, however, are often studded with specific suggestions and recommendations for current or future programs. The range of comments of the young correspondents is substantially wider than the range of comments contained in letters to the same network from adults. Inasmuch as children might be likely to have fresher perceptions than their elders, their ability to range widely in their letters is perhaps not surprising.

The majority of the letters deal with programs that are directed primarily to the adult audience. The high incidence of such letters reflects the well-established preference of many children for adult fare rather than that directed specifically to children. The letters

dealing with the time at which a program is shown usually request that an adult program be shown at an earlier hour.

It is likely that one reason for the children writing relatively little about children's programs is that their audience may be composed of children who cannot write. By the age at which young people have learned to write, they are likely to hear friends and classmates discussing adult programs, and the latter tend to supersede their earlier interest in children's programs.

The dominant manifest themes of the letters could be coded. Seventy per cent were requests, while 15.2 per cent voice enjoyment of some aspect of a program. Some kind of suggestion connected to a program was made by 7.1 per cent, while 5.3 per cent expressed complaints about something. One per cent each commented on television in general, the writer's interest in the medium, and sponsors, respectively. Any classification of these letters must fail to do justice to the vigor and interest of the young letter writers, which manifest themselves in so many different ways.

### **Suggestions**

The 7.1 per cent of the mail that consisted of suggestions covered a wide range. A nine year old girl suggested a specific new program: "My friends and I are crazy about Nancy Drew mystery stories by Carolyn Keene. We would like you to show these stories on TV. All the kids love her. Nancy is pretty, attractive, has blond hair and blue eyes. She's kind, useful, and smart. She's around eighteen and she's a detective. Her boy friend is an athlete. He's tall and handsome. I am sure Nancy would get a high rating." Even such a young correspondent is seemingly aware of the realities of "a high rating." Another program suggestion is made by a junior high school student: "I liked the fairy tales that you presented with Shirley Temple. I would like to see the *Odyssey* in a series on television. Many people read myths and legends and it would make a good show."

One student, commenting favorably on a program devoted to the White House, recommended thirty other subjects that could be useful for school history studies. Many other suggestions for possible programs were made by correspondents, including suggestions for over 50 different kinds of science fiction programs.

### **Complaints**

The young viewers had complaints about a variety of matters. Some 5.3 per cent had complaints. A major policy matter is the

subject of dislike by another correspondent: "I am only 15 but have a deep sense of patriotism that I am proud of. Saturday on television, a news report implied that teenagers are leaning toward socialism and communism. This is nonsense. I am not an American who sits back and leaves everything to politicians. Our industries belong rightfully to private enterprise." The writer went on to discuss teenagers' interests in private property.

One 14-year-old's complaint dealt with the manner in which teenagers are presented on television: "I am a teenager. Judging from your television shows in the past month, I'm sure you now think that I beat up old ladies, drag in my hot rod, and am a chain smoker. . . . After spending so much time and money on these shows, why are you trying to scare your audience away?" The writer then gave three examples of gratuitous slurring of teenagers on recent programs. He noted that during the same period a Texas teenager had received recognition for inventing a machine that enables deaf people to hear, but had not been given recognition on television.

Westerns, under fire from many different quarters, get their lumps from a seventh-grade critic: "The way you have told about it in your cowboy programs, it should be called the New West. Here are a few things you could do to make them more real. Have the six guns shoot only six bullets instead of about twenty before they reload. Have different trails; when a good guy chases a bad guy they go around the same rock or tree about five times. One more thing you could change is those fights on those "weak" stairways. The little kids who watch all the westerns won't know who to believe, the programs or the teacher. P.S. Let the bad men win once."

One 11-year-old complained: "You and I both know that Billy the Kid was an outlaw. He killed his first man at the age of 13, and in the back! I hope that you will put in more of the truth because when my little sisters and brothers study about the heroes of the West they won't know whether to believe TV or the book." Detective programs also come under fire from a ten-year-old girl. "I don't like detective and gangster pictures. Some people watch these programs just to be smart."

Commercial practices come under the watchful eye of a 12-year-old viewer: "I like the little theme songs that appear either before or after the actual program. But lately, you often stop them to put in a plug for some other program or a commercial. Why can't you put your plug in afterwards? Don't you pay people to write those themes?" A 14-year-old comments semi-critically on a current

medical program: "This show is a welcome change. Medicine has had great progress in our century, and I will be looking forward to more programs illustrating these breakthroughs."

The young viewers' impatience with a lack of form is seen in a comment from one 10-year-old: "I don't care for shows where all they do is talk and say a few jokes." This kind of recurring observation suggests that many children may want substance in their television fare.

### *Enjoyment and Praise*

Over fifteen per cent (15.2) of the young viewers express enjoyment of many different facets of the programs about which they write. The personality of some actors is praised. A 13-year-old comments on a comedian: "He has respect for other people. His hobby is people, for if there is one thing everybody can understand it's comedy and laughter. He is very kindhearted. I appreciate what he does in making people laugh."

Acting is sometimes praised. One 12-year-old recommended: "I'd like to give my utmost compliments to——for the stupendous acting he did on the program last week. It was the best acting I have seen in a long time, very realistic. I'd like to shake his hand but since that is impossible I would appreciate it if you would shake his hand for me."

The latent themes of some situation comedies elicit praise from children. A 12-year-old commented on one situation comedy: "I like watching the program every week. I like it because it shows how a family is held together by love. Also because it shows how much they like the maid even if she is not a relative. Thank you for putting the program on our channel in our town, because it teaches us to stop quarreling so much and love each other. Thank you again." A 13-year-old writes: "Every week we look forward to watching——. This story not only has humor and tenderness in it, but it also teaches us lessons in life. It supports the youth of today even though that might sound silly to some people. In various ways, it reveals the true personality and characters living in the world."

Another youngster knows what he likes: "I'm only going on 13, and I suppose I don't have much experience in this, but I think I know when I see something I like. And I KNOW I like ——. It's got something! It's different! It's the kind of story that could happen to anyone. But these shows are presented in such a way that they look different. It's WONDERFUL! The only way I could

really describe it would be to use slang terms and then I suppose my parents wouldn't let me send this letter."

Some children write about programs that help them in social studies at school. One sixth-grader comments on a series: "Just a brief note to thank you for your excellent series of eight programs concerning the issues and candidates in the elections. Your attention to campaigns in every area of the nation definitely broadened my knowledge and interest." Another child comments on a special program that elicited many letters from young people: "I would like to congratulate you on a very nice coverage of our space shot. Since I watched it from the very beginning to the very last I feel I am qualified to do this. I learned a lot and hope you will cover the other space shots." Similar praise is given to another special program: "I saw the program on television about Mrs. Kennedy and the White House. I like programs like that about famous people and famous places. It was just wonderful, really interesting, and I learned from it as well."

One young fan praises a situation comedy because of its observance of the proprieties: "I think that it is a riot the way those fellows get into trouble trying to help someone. They are so funny. It is a decent program, too! They don't have women running around there half-naked. I think it can be rated as an A-1 show. I Like it! Spelled with a capital L!" This viewer, after signing his name, notes: "Age 9 years 11 months 12 days."

The self-selection of viewers for programs concerned with specific occupations is implicit in one eighth-grader's letter: "I want to congratulate you on the program. It was very educational and I feel that it will help people to realize more about diseases and cures of the heart. I hope to become a doctor and I learn a lot from your medical series." Another young potential doctor wrote: "I must praise your absorbing presentation last night. With avid interest, our family experienced the marvelous drama in the operating room. I'm sure the public appreciates this informative and vital type of program. The photography was excellent. Please schedule similar shows in the future."

### *Requests*

There were many different reasons for the variety of requests that were made by the 70 per cent of the writers who made requests. Twenty-nine per cent of the writers made a request because they enjoyed a program, 13 per cent because it was related to school work, and 12 per cent liked a character on a program. Eight per

cent made a request because they disliked a program and 7 per cent as the result of a program's theme. Six per cent responded to the time at which a program is on, while 2 per cent were making inquiries based on color programs. One per cent each of the requests stemmed from careers and hobbies connected with broadcasting.

A wide range of requests was made by the young writers of the mail. These requests included: keeping a specific program on the air (18.8 per cent), a photograph of a performer (17.2 per cent), interest in the theme of a program (8.2 per cent), discontinuing a program (6.4 per cent), changing the time of a program (5.1 per cent), more educational programs (5 per cent), new types of programs (4.3 per cent), rerunning a program (3.8 per cent), details on performers (3.7 per cent), a copy of a script (3.5 per cent), used equipment (e.g., a microphone) (1.9 per cent), borrow film or tape (1.6 per cent), program information (1.5 per cent), career information (1.4 per cent), program ought to be longer (1.4 per cent), modify commercials (1.3 per cent), get new performers (1.2 per cent), fan club information (1.2 per cent), a chance to submit a program idea or script (1.1 per cent), and a chance to meet a performer (1 per cent).

The letters requesting the return of programs often had much emotional tone, with language like: "Could you please oh could you please put——back on TV. . . . God bless you for keeping ——on. . . . I would even miss a party just to be able to stay home and watch——. . . . I am so, so sad. . . ."

Some requests call for a specific episode to be rerun: "This science fiction was of great interest to me (I am 12 years old) and my family because it has to do with today's world situation and how, if life does exist on other planets, they feel about our testing with such things as bombs and rockets. I think this idea is so important and I learned so much from it that I would appreciate it being shown again." A 14-year-old, commenting on the same program, writes: "I cannot find words of praise enough for it and the wonderful final speech. It will remain in my memory for many years to come. It was in beautiful coincidence with the President's announcement of possible nuclear arms tests starting and should have brought many to realize the importance for different nations' space explorations. Please run it again."

A 14-year-old raises an objection to a program being taken off the air: "I read with utter horror an announcement in the paper that my favorite program might go off. I am president of our school's fan club for the program. If the program leaves, we wouldn't

have a club and there would be nothing to talk about in civics class on Tuesdays."

Children who write in are quite vocal in calling attention to their special interests: "You'll put a good horse show on and leave it on 1 or maybe 2 years, but you leave some stupid old musical or detective show on for 5 or 6 years. Why can't you put a *good* horse show on and *leave* it on?" This 12-year-old signed his letter "Puzzled and Angry."

A 10-year-old candidly announces his intention of boycotting the network if it will not grant his request that a specific program remain on the air: "I will not look at any of your programs if you don't keep——. Except once in a while, but when I can't decide between your channel or another, I'll pick the other one." A 14-year-old asked for a series of specific programs "with substance, and less of that escape stuff our folks like."

A 14-year-old girl wrote about a program that was supposed to be going off the air: "I like the program very much. My mother would be lonesome without it, and my little sister likes it. If it is taken off, what can we talk about at the lunch table? It gets tiring talking about school and teachers all the time. If people don't like the program, why don't they turn off the television and read the newspaper or something and let the program stay?"

A common grievance, voiced by a sixth grader, is based on the hour at which some programs are shown: "My favorite star is on at 9:00 Sunday night. But I don't get to see it because 9:00 is our bedtime because of school the next day. So could you put it on earlier on Sunday?"

Television has steadily been increasing its news coverage, and scheduled a number of documentary and news interpretation programs during the later evening hours. Scheduling such news analyses in depth at a time when adults can see them does not necessarily have the approval of some children, and a fairly common request deals with school subjects and schedule timing. "I am 12 years old. In social studies my favorite subject is current events. These programs are on after 10 o'clock, but my parents will not allow me to stay up that late. I know these programs will flourish if they are presented at an earlier time." Other requests for programs to be shown earlier deal with other adult fare that would seem to be of questionable merit for relatively young viewers.

The difficulties of the broadcaster in pleasing all elements is implied in a letter from the midwest: "On Sunday you have some of my favorite programs. At that time I am in church. I would

appreciate it if you could please change these programs to earlier on Sunday afternoon. There are a lot of children at church who would like it changed also."

A special segment of the child audience also made its desires known: "I am a fourteen-year-old who spends almost every Friday and Saturday night baby-sitting. We tolerated your night shows, but now we feel the need to protest. . . . I would like more romance." Since baby sitters are generally teenage girls who do not bring their reading material, they may have relatively specific program requirements. A 10-year-old girl writes: "I would like to know why———doesn't get married in the show. Every time he's going to get married the girl dies or she can't get married. I think that he ought to get married."

The candor of some of the youthful letter writers is seen in this kind of fairly common request: "I am writing because my class is making a report on why TV is bad. Could you send me what you have on this subject." A 9-year-old makes a typical request to the host of a program: "I always watch your program. I like it very much. Would you send me a picture of you? How old were you when you started show business? Please write the answer on the back of the picture. You look good in your moustache. You're cute."

Bright students delight in detecting what they regard as errors: "Your program said the sun goes around the world in 24 hours. He must be nuts because the sun don't travel around the world. I know that and I'm only 10½ years old. Will you please check this?" Some of the requests are clearly unique to young viewers. One 13-year-old wrote: "Could you please run———again? I liked and enjoyed it but I didn't understand all of it. If I see it again, maybe I will." Other letters request that more fiction and plays be shown, because "I like to see it before I read it." Girls may write in to ask for more medical programs because they are planning to become nurses.

The magical expectations of some young viewers can be seen in a request from a 10-year-old: "Your opera *Boris Gudonov* was marvelous. I was wondering if you would send me some rings that the King of Russia wore. I would be ever so happy if you could. I would also like one of those jeweled staffs or a crown."

A common request deals with future programs relating to school subjects. "I am a member of a 6th grade class and will be studying Europe next month. Since this will be my subject, I would like to know if you would send me a list of the television programs about Europe that you will be presenting in the next few months.

The people, physical features, or history of Europe would be of great value to me. I would appreciate this.”

Some requests clearly are at variance with what we know about the principles of desirable fare for children. One 12-year-old wrote: “Almost everybody at our school and neighborhood are talking about monsters like Werewolf and Wolfman. I asked my mom and dad about monsters like these. They said they used to watch them when they were kids. I am asking you to show these kinds of shows. Most of the kids I know like shows about monsters. I would also like it if you would send me some information and pictures about Wolfman. . . .”

### *Science and Technology*

A number of letters, mostly requests, deal with the technological aspects of television. A 10-year-old writes: “I would like to know how you produce your programs. I would also like to know how many people you have working on lights and sound. How do they train for this kind of work? These things interest me very much.” A 12-year-old writes: “We were wondering if you would write me back and tell me about sound effects. I wish you would tell me some ways you make sound effects.”

There are those who respond to the manner in which science is presented on television. “The way the program is presented is very interesting to me,” wrote a sixth-grader. “Many topics are those of which we have studied in class, especially for our science fair. Even my father stops what he is doing to watch your program. We watched the program where a homemade computer for doing addition was shown and want to make our own. But we don’t know too much about electronics, and before starting the computer we have decided to ask the man who owns one, and that is you.”

Some children who view educational programs ask for guidance on how to meet children with similar interests. A 13-year-old writes: “Is there any club or study group that I could go to in order to meet up with children who have similar interests in experimenting and science? I have a real interest in these things and enjoy your broadcasts very much. I would like to join a club where I could do more work in science than we get at school. I want to be a scientist.”

A frequent request is for a script in connection with a school task. “I am in a science club in our school. For the school we must act a play on time. We hope you will give us the script to the show you put on Monday about time.”

### *Some Qualities of Children's Mail*

The substantial and continuing flow of relatively thoughtful letters from a good proportion of these youthful letter writers suggests that they are interacting with television in a fairly active manner. The medium seems to offer them an opportunity for self-expression. Its pull can be surmised from the 7 per cent of the writers who said that the letter they were writing was the first they had ever written.

The freedom that some of the letter writers feel about writing in to someone they do not know was expressed by one correspondent: "I may be only 8½ years old, but I have a right to say what I feel." The fervor that may be generated by viewing specific programs is suggested by one 10-year-old who was writing about a program dealing with the Civil War. He wrote that "I love the Civil War like a man loves a woman." The cumulative effect of the serial format of many programs is suggested by a 9-year-old girl: "Every day I can hardly wait till Thursday to see the program. . . ."

Children's mail differs from mail from adults in terms of the freshness of perception and relatively unfettered imagination which children bring to their television viewing. Some of the mail, especially that which is critical, shows an awareness of things that are unlikely to be noticed by adults. Many of these letter writers are obviously actively participating in the life of the program and making mature statements about their aspirations and wishes.

How intelligent and emotionally sound are these letter writers? Judging from the vocabulary level, length of the communication, and spelling, these letters are coming from the viewers of normal to high intelligence. On the basis of the internal evidence of the letters, these youngsters are generally stable and emotionally healthy, aware of social formalities. They can express their ideas earnestly and explicitly.

Explicitness characterizes their expression of what they want. Even when they criticize, they say what they do want. Their ability to state their wants and to say what can be done about them is healthily direct. Perhaps because television is so important to these young people, they speak up more directly than do adults, to whom the medium may be more incidental. They are more aware of many program details than the adults who write. Many of these children feel as strongly about specific programs as earlier generations of young people felt about books.

It is also important to be aware of the extent to which a young viewer who writes a letter may be using his letter as a kind of projective device, so that it may be more solipsistic and projective than its manifest content might suggest. Interpreting children's mail clearly requires a high degree of sensitivity to how children perceive and communicate. Such sensitivity is especially necessary because of the extent which children frankly communicate their mixed feelings about programs, so that a criticism is often coupled with praise.

As a number of studies have noted, mail from viewers is studied very closely by a network.<sup>5</sup> It may enter into the decision to extend the run of a program, or to schedule it at another time of day.<sup>6</sup> In 1952, for example, a popular puppet program that had been shown three times a week was rescheduled for alternate Sundays. It was returned to the thrice weekly format largely as the result of mail from children protesting the change in frequency. In 1957, another program scheduled at 8:30 P.M. and dealing with a veterinarian and his patients, that had been scheduled to go off the air after 13 weeks, was continued for another 13-week cycle. The decision was probably partially based on the mail from children about the program.

Probably children's mail is effective in reversing management decisions to remove a program in a minority of cases, because mail from viewers is only one dimension of a program, and many dimensions enter into a decision about its continuation. Thus one program addressed largely to teenagers was withdrawn, although many pieces of mail from young people urged its continuance. On some occasions the producer of a program may deliberately seek to generate a large volume of mail protesting the program's being cancelled, and it is important to differentiate between such "inspired" correspondence and truly spontaneous mail.

Although mail from children deals with most of the themes that are found in adult mail, it does contain many themes that are unique to children. It is quite different from the kind of mail that children wrote in the days before television, when a typical subject for a youngster's letter might be a delay in the receipt of a premium in exchange for a box-top that had been submitted. Television is tapping a very wide range of interests and responses in these children, if the letters analyzed in this sample are in any way paradigmatic. The children's transfer of interest to other activities, as they grow older, will doubtless partially be a function of what the medium will be like in the future. For the present, many of the

letters in which young viewers communicate their ideas about television clearly warrant careful study and interpretation as well as feedback into program contents.

#### NOTES

1. Bureau of Social Science Research, *Fan Mail: Its Use in Evaluating Effectiveness*. Washington: The Bureau, 1953.
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4. Ralph Garry, F. B. Rainsberry, and Charles Winick, *For the Young Viewer*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1962, pp. 143-175.
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6. Charles Winick, "Censor and Sensibility," *Journal of Broadcasting*, 5 (1) 1961, pp.117-136.

# WE GET LETTERS

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BARBARA SAPINSLEY

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The television rating services spend lots of time (and make lots of money) surveying TV audiences and coming up with analyses of who watches what and when. But there's an easier way. If you want to have your finger on the viewer's pulse, I recommend you read the fan mail. On *The Twentieth Century*, which doesn't keep as much traffic off the roads on Sunday evenings as Ed Sullivan probably does, we get 50 to 100 letters a week in season. And if the writers' names and addresses are legible and they aren't too vituperative, we answer them all.

You can't imagine the numbers of people who leap to take their pens in hand to tell CBS, their local stations or reporter Walter Cronkite personally, exactly what they think and exactly what they want. During 26 weeks of the year—from late October to late April—they praise and damn, suggest future programs, request pertinent and impertinent information, grind personal axes, attempt to settle bets and resolve arguments, and ask for clips from films in which they have rightly or wrongly recognized themselves, friends and relations, neighbors, parents and children, dead and alive. We seem to have superceded the World Almanac, Encyclopedia Britannica, the nearest public library and Dr. Spock as the voice of authority.

The questions they ask range from the sublime to the ridiculous,

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from where to buy a certain black pencil to which five countries have higher suicide rates than Sweden (which, we reported in a two-part program on Sweden, was number six in that area).

One small boy wanted to know how you could film the front view of a cannon going off without the cameraman getting shot. Another asked for a map of outer space. A woman, after our program on Ireland, wanted to know how to order Irish Coffee glasses; another reported that she had ordered them but they hadn't arrived; to whom could she complain? A third asked if we could help her find out if she had any Irish ancestors.

A musical letter-writer said he KNEW a special kind of black pencil had been used to write down the score for "Hiroshima"; what kind was it and where could he buy one? Another small boy (many of our correspondents are small boys) asked if Camp Century, the "City under the Ice" in Greenland, was heated and if so why the heat didn't melt the ice. And we once got an urgent request for the name and address of the six-foot-sixer who acted as escort to little Premier Daladier of France at the signing of the Munich Pact in "Crisis at Munich," from the secretary of the Texas Tall Girls Association. Then there are always the youngsters who blithely ask for all the information we have on World War I, World War II, the causes of the depression and the weather.

When it comes to solving barroom arguments of sporting bets, we run the New York *Daily News* night city desk stiff competition. Many letters come in from people who obviously have money riding on the reply. One wanted to know if, in our program "Rockne of Notre Dame," Rockne was really Rockne or Pat O'Brien playing the part. (It was Rockne.) A boy wrote that his father claimed the locker-room pep-talk scene in the same program was staged because he didn't think there was sound-on-film that early (there was), and he thought the FCC prohibited microphones in locker rooms (they don't). The son maintained just as earnestly that *The Twentieth Century* wouldn't fake anything (it wouldn't). Another bet we had to settle was whether Floyd Patterson fought Ingemar Johansson in the 1952 Olympiad, a sequence in our program "The Olympics." The writer wanted corroboration for his belief but we had to let him down; Patterson and Johansson both fought, but not each other.

Among other questions:

· Why was the face of Betty Grable's blackmailer blacked out in our program on the FBI? The writer had asked the FBI first and

gotten a form reply saying their files were confidential, so he turned to us. (The answer: To preserve his anonymity since he has long since paid his debt to society and is now going straight.)

·Who was the handsome unhappy Frenchman who felt life had no future for him interviewed by David Schoenbrun in "France in Ferment"? (Several young women and a couple of not-so-young ones wanted to write to him and cheer him up.)

·Who was the vivacious co-ed whom Dan Schorr interviewed in "The Berliners: Life in a Gilded Cage"? (We referred one male enquirer to CBS News in Germany and the young lady in question apparently answered him because the last we heard was a grateful "thank you" letter in which he looked forward to the development of a long and beautiful friendship.)

·Why wasn't "The Man Who Spied on Pearl Harbor" shot? (Because when war broke out, the American authorities didn't know he was a spy. They thought he was the Consular clerk he purported to be, and as such he was first interned and then exchanged with the rest of the Japanese diplomatic corps for the American diplomatic corps interned in Japan.)

One man was disturbed by the mention of the Free University in Berlin on the program on the Berliners. He assumed the word "Free" meant no tuition; he further assumed that this meant the United States was subsidizing it, which irked him more than somewhat because he was paying plenty for his daughter's education here. (It's called "Free" to distinguish it from the unfree or Communist-controlled universities in East Germany.)

The praise we get is usually general, the damnation specific—and both come from coast to coast, from towns as small as Freedom, Wyoming to New York City itself. Our most unreasonable complaints come mostly from Southern California, and the strangest of those from Whittier, don't ask me why.

The usual letter of approval tells us we're the most worthwhile program on the air, that we provide valuable information and provide it excitingly and that we have helped innumerable students in their studies. And during the brief period in the spring of 1961 when our sponsor was considering changing its next year's TV plans, we had any number of mournful letters and postcards including one which read plaintively: "Is there to be nothing left on TV for *we* (italics ours) who can read and write?"

The protests vary in strength with the emotional content of the subject. We got some very stiff letters from exiled members of the outlawed Irish Republican Army after our show on Ireland,

claiming that unless we had talked to their brethren, currently in Irish jails, we couldn't have a clear picture of the country. After our "War in Spain," the story of the Spanish civil war, we were called impartially Communists and Fascists. On a milder level, we had a couple of protests from Gertrude Ederle fans because she hadn't been included in "The Olympics." One woman maintained that David Schoenbrun, in "France in Ferment," was wrong in using the expression "thumbs down" to mean disapproval. To her it meant the opposite. (It depends on which Latin reference you use.) A gym teacher complained because the New York Football Giants, in "The Violent World of Sam Huff," smoked in their locker room, thereby setting a poor example for his high school students.

One letter, addressed to "Prudential Ins. Co. In your 20 million dollar home, Newark, N. J.," said: "No one wants to see Hitler, Stahlin or Krushel (sic)—for that matter I could get along if I never heard of Wilson, Roosevelt (sic) and definitely Harry Truman."

As for those who saw themselves, they varied from an American woman interned in the Philippines during the war who wrote that she was "the skinny cadaver with the hat sitting opposite a man drinking out of a bottle" in the liberation sequence in "Freedom for the Philippines," to a retired policeman who saw himself saluting Teddy Roosevelt's casket in "The Times of Teddy Roosevelt." A Beverly Hills businessman recognized himself boarding a troopship in "Over Here"; a German baker, now in Oklahoma, saw himself as a "little soldier" invading the Sudetenland in "Crisis at Munich"; a Danish emigré spotted himself in "Sabotage!," the story of the Danish underground during World War II, as one of the Danish Jews smuggled by fishing boat across the Skaggerak to neutral Sweden. A CBS telephone operator, who missed it first time 'round, saw her husband liberating Manila in the rerun of "Freedom for the Philippines." "He was the only one not wearing a helmet and he needed a shave," she said. (He did, too.) We got three letters from Hungarian refugees who saw relatives in our "Hungary Today." One, an exile since the 1956 uprising, spotted her daughter whom she never thought she'd see again, in a street sequence; another found her father. The third, who emigrated after she and her husband were released from concentration camps in 1945, saw her only living relative—an aunt—and an old family friend in a sequence at the registry where marriages are performed. (One of the ceremonies that day was the marriage of the old friend's granddaughter, to which our correspondent had been invited but couldn't go because the Hungarians wouldn't let her in.)

The suggestions we get for future shows also run the gamut—from the History of the Met to a show on drag races. Other suggestions: A non-political show on the Congo, automobile accidents, volunteer fire departments, cemeteries around the world (which the writer thought should be shown on Memorial Day), the stock market crash, motels, sharpshooting, the K-9 Corps, the Rock of Gibraltar, G-man Melvin Purvis, the intellectual background of East Germany (Bach, Luther, Goethe). A lot of Greeks suggested the Italian invasion of Greece in 1940; several Letts wanted a program on Lithuania. Someone asked for the English equivalent of Wyatt Earp; someone else, the bird hospital at New Delhi, India. Dr. Dooley, Richard Rodgers, Al Capone, George M. Cohan and Alan Shepard all have their adherents.

But by far the largest group of letter writers is made up of students who want us to do their homework for them. They have suddenly decided to do their term papers on the subject of last Sunday's telecast and would appreciate it if we would send script, synopsis, research report, pictures, maps, illustrations, charts, graphs, or allied material, even the film itself, for which they will gladly pay postage. (Sometimes they include a dime or a quarter.) And all of this or any part thereof would be appreciated as soon as possible, please, because they are in a hurry.

The choice of topics must surprise the teachers: Sweden, Woodrow Wilson, Japan, Dr. Goebbels, Ireland, the Minuteman missile, the difficulty of getting into college, General Marshall and the Marshall Plan, V-1 and V-2 rockets, the Remagen bridge, Dr. Gordon Seagrave, drug addiction, the battle of the Bulge, the Doolittle raid on Tokyo.

The students range from sixth grade to graduate school. Sometimes the small ones add that they have their mothers' permission to write; sometimes the mother even writes for them.

An Army wife wrote to Walter Cronkite that her husband was an instructor and "would appreciate having copies of all your past talks on this TV series" (there had been 105 as of that date; there have now been 150). One self-styled writer asked for the material on the Murmansk run from our show "Suicide Run to Murmansk," because he thought it would be a "supurb" (sic) subject for a book. And one youngster wanted everything on the 20th century "as we are studying it in class."

Then there are the fortunately rare letters which include such passages as these:

"The ultimate goal is obvious 'total thought freedom,' when this is achieved each man is himself a 'comprehensive designer.' His

thinking from one instant may dwell on any of a number of problems competently (sic), in terms of the *need* and the *solution*, the mechanics may be a little longer coming, there-in time becomes a factor."

And—

"The parties responsible while seeming to be acquainted with the definition of a theory, proceeded by abstraction from the real world to a system of inter-relationships and using logical deductions arrived at theoretical conclusions which by interpretation arrived at the physical consequences."

This is where "Dear Abby" resorts to a form and writes politely, "Thank you so much for letting us know your views."

In conclusion, let me quote the young man who approved of our programs on Paris and New York in the '20s as the golden age of contemporary civilization. For, he wrote, "what CONSTRUCTIVE thing has been produced in the 30s-40s or the 50s, except the transistor?"

What indeed—except TV fan mail?

# BOOKS IN REVIEW

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Ralph D. Casey (ed.). *THE PRESS IN PERSPECTIVE*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963.

It makes relatively little sense to review *The Press in Perspective*, because it can't be reviewed sensibly. Rather, it should be read by anyone who has an interest in contemporary history or in contemporary journalism.

*The Press in Perspective* is nothing more, nor less, than a collection of 16 lectures—or more accurately, in most cases, 16 spoken essays delivered annually at a University of Minnesota forum established through a grant of the Newspaper Guild of the Twin Cities in memory of three guildsmen killed in World War II. The first essay was delivered by Marquis Childs in 1947; the last one appearing in the volume was delivered by John Fischer, editor-in-chief of *Harper's Magazine*, in the Fall of 1962. In between are pieces by the late Tom Stokes (1948); Scotty Reston (1949); Reinhold Niebuhr (1950); the late Elmer Davis (1951); Alan Barth, chief editorial writer of the *Washington Post* (1952); Eric Sevareid (1953); George V. Ferguson, editor of the *Montreal Star* (1954); Professor Henry S. Commager (1955); Herbert L. Block (Herblock to us) (1956); Doris Fleeson (1957); Gerald W. Johnson (1958); Louis M. Lyons (1959); Joe Alsop (1960); and a doubleheader by Pierre Salinger and Jim Hagerty in 1961. Obviously, this physically slim but intellectually nourishing volume presents a varied diet since it presents such a varied cast of the great journalists of our time. Each does his turn in a journalistic variety program whose first and last acts span a decade and a half.

And since each has his own style, his own role in journalism (or history) and his own special way of communicating—depending on whether he is print or electronic, columnist, editor, press secretary, historian, philosopher, or all of them combined—there is more variety than unity, more excerpts than symphony.

And yet, curiously, this collection is more than a sum of all its parts. The 16 spoken essays spread over so many years are valuable not only each for itself, but also for the perspectives they do in fact provide in combination. They provide a perspective of the press, and, as well, a perspective of the post-World War II period. Not the least interesting aspect of this volume is the opportunity it gives to the reader to recall the last decade and a half and the things which bothered the conscientious journalists so very much from recent year to recent year. There is a curious note of nostalgia—of time gone by—as we recall how very much the McCarthy era occupied the mind and conscience of these journalists, and how the press handling of McCarthyism sharpened the fundamental questions of the role of the press—and the definition of objectivity.

And then as McCarthyism receded—whether a bubble burst of its own empty swelling or pricked by the needles of journalists we will never know—the working journalists (at least those represented in this book) turned their concern to another aspect of journalistic truth—the role of the press in holding our government's feet to the fire and its blemishes to the magnifying glass. I will leave it to the Republican skeptics to conclude that this shift in concern came with the working journalists' dissatisfaction with the Eisenhower Administration. For the important thing is that any journalist, if he is worthy of his profession, has to have fire in his belly. And having fire in the belly is just another way of saying that he has to be mad—mad about something, dissatisfied about what is, exasperated about the ins, and enthusiastic about the times for a change. Whoever made the selection of the lecturers for this group admired the great ones in the business and, lucky selectors, had no obligations to be concerned about fairness and balance.

The book is the better for that.

Those in journalism who communicate in such a way that their words become relatively permanent through translation into books—instead of the more finite and ephemeral life of yesterday's newspaper, last week's news magazine, and last minute's broadcast—run a real risk. Because the reader of the book, with the luxurious hindsight of ten or twelve years, may conclude that what was yesterday's eternal verity is today's irrelevance—or even inaccuracy. But by and large the lecturers gathered in this book have survived that terrible risk well.

But the book does remind us of the cruel tricks history can play when one's words are made semi-permanent. For in 1961, as noted, Pierre Salinger and Jim Hagerty shared the platform and divided up the hour in successive talks. Pierre Salinger went first. One can picture that when he was finished he sat next to the podium, a scarce few feet away as Jim Hagerty began his talk. Right at the outset Jim spoke these words:

"I have been asked this question many times: if the Vice-President (Richard Nixon) had been elected President in 1960, would you have been his press secretary? The answer is no. *I think Pierre would agree with me that you can only work for one President in your lifetime.* The associations that you have with that President are so close that I am sure I could not work for anyone else in that job."

I would give my next to last nickel to know today whether Pierre, sitting next to Jim that day in Milwaukee, shook his head horizontally, vertically, or not at all.

*Richard S. Salant*

*CBS News*

Albert A. Shea. BROADCASTING: THE CANADIAN WAY.  
Montreal: Harvest House, Ltd., 1963.

The Canadian system of broadcasting unquestionably has served Canada well. But the administration of it has been hampered by its vast complexity. Like Canada's railways, airlines and banking, broadcasting in Canada is (typically) a compromise—a pooling of public and private resources in an attempt to overcome the handicap of a relatively small population and a very large territory.

Albert A. Shea has attempted to throw some light on the confusion

created over many years of broadcasting development, but has neglected the one element—the human—which might have made his book more interesting reading. Lacking are both a sense of humor and literary style. Mr. Shea badgers us with statistics and quotations from the dusty-jacketed findings of four Royal Commissions and some fifteen Parliamentary Committees. All, of course, have had an influence on the course of Canadian broadcasting history, but Mr. Shea is so preoccupied with the bureaucratic aspects that one suspects the monumental job of research sent him a little stir-crazy.

Mr. Shea may have had a head start in that direction in having been commissioned by the Canadian Broadcasting League (a self-appointed watchdog group representing various Canadian organizations) to do a study of "Basic Issues in Broadcasting." This study, he tells us, whetted his interest in Canadian broadcasting and resulted in his recently published book.

Unfortunately he fails to whet the interest of the reader.

Someday someone will document the true history of broadcasting in Canada. He will deal with the subject in human terms and recount the triumphs, the disappointments, the tragedies and the dedication of those private and public broadcasters who have been the real builders of Canada's unique system of broadcasting—the people who have made broadcasting in Canada work.

I, for one, look forward to it.

*Thom Benson*

*Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*

Sam J. Slate and Joe Cook. *IT SOUNDS IMPOSSIBLE*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963.

The final word on Television, in book form, will never be written. Not so with Radio. *The* book on Radio has just appeared; Sam J. Slate, General Manager of WCBS (New York), and his side-kick, Joe Cook, are the authors.

The book is a wow in all ways: accurate, funny, fast, complete, chatty, serious, informative—and sociologically important. In fact, it's the only Radio book that can make this claim, including all the 266 Radio books written by sociologists! It is candid, unembarrassed, brave, blunt, revelatory, and sometimes a bit apologetic that we could have really *ever* been this way. (Or that way.) And it's crammed with old pictures that will make you howl, or make you weep and wonder. The pictures, by the way, have run the price up to \$7 (if you pay the mayor of NYC his 4%), but it's worth it. The title is so apt: *It Sounds Impossible*.

The writing team of Slate & Cook change key on almost every page, moving from the perceptive to the garish to the philosophical to the shocking to the absurd to the repugnant—with the speed of John J. Anthony telling you what's wrong with your marriage and how to shuck it. (As a passing incidentalism, their dissection of John J. is done without ether, even without so much as a merciful conk on the dome—and this alone is worth the price of the book.) It seems that Lester Kroll (the real name of John J. Anthony—and since we're into him we might as well go the route) was a cab-driver who couldn't sell his stage plays despite the WPA, but "could be found giving free lectures in the flea-circus belt around Times Square." Those who were professionally involved with this garrulous, self-created, epicene Mother McCree-Father Confessor will remember that his ego and his office—both so hung with trophies as to make the Smithsonian look like a burgled gun-rack—made it impossible for him

to ever enter the office of an advertising agency to talk about sponsorship (he couldn't demean himself so far!).

It was Broadway's Roland Winters, a truly splendid actor, who announced this twitchy Cagliostro; Winters, the rotund, the trobbing (and brother of that superb pianist Robert Winternitz). It was Winters who brought "dignity" to this appalling and sensational side-show—Radio's most successful agony column—with the majestic delivery of the following not-very-immortal lines: *You have a friend and adviser in John J. Anthony. And thousands are happier and more successful today because of John J. Anthony!*

The story of Phillips H. Lord (Seth Parker) is, in its way, as kookie and opportunistic as the rise of the cabbie Kroll into Mr. Anthony—and with much of the same evangelical chill and graceless grab and self-developed prehensibility. Sticky fellows, nerveless, non-human, psychiatrically humorless, lonely, almost psychotically self-believing—and mercenary as a column of army ants.

The book rushes: "I have in mind a plan of development" (so wrote David Sarnoff to the general manager of the Marconi Company) "which would make radio a 'household utility' in the same sense as the piano or phonograph. The idea is to bring music into the home by wireless." The Slate-Cook book tells how this came to pass and who did what. Nothing is left out, nobody is spared; and those who deserve the credit for invention, innovation, and programming delivery are all generously acknowledged.

We're reminded that Stoopnagle and Budd decided that "people have the most fun of anybody"; that Bing Crosby had sideburns 30 years before Elvis. We re-encounter, affectionately, endearingly, analytically, nostalgically, the true beginnings—without the bells and the bunting—of "Easy Aces," Ruth Etting, Helen Morgan, Lionel Hampton, "Myrt & Marge," and John Barrymore (of whom John Royal, the most dynamic individual ever on the NBC payroll, said: "When Barrymore's voice filled the room, it was the kind of dramatic dynamite that made showmen weep with appreciation").

The phenomenon of Arthur Godfrey is sensitively and objectively poked into, and abandoned. S&C can't figure him either.

Vituperative letters are quoted: "MY little girl throwed up in school today. She ain't give to throwin up and they say its the radio and you got to give her sunthing."

"The American people will never stand for advertising on radio!" (Herbert Hoover, as Secretary of Commerce)

Vincent Lopez and his "corny orchestra" was the father of the dance remote.

Ed Wynn was the father of the studio audience.

WGN (World's Greatest Newspaper) of the Chicago *Tribune* broadcast the entire Scopes evolution trial from Dayton, Tennessee in 1925. That same year Gar Wood raced the 20th Century Limited down a 75-mile stretch of the Hudson, and Schenectady's WGY covered.

The famous tenor, John McCormack, withdrew from radio when he found his record sales taking a dip.

And Will Rogers: "Radio is too big a thing to be out of!"

If John Royal, who was the master program-builder for NBC, was once press agent for Houdini, Royal met his rival in a cigar-maker named Paley. Both are still around and lively, but they fought back and forth, with Paley winning most of the falls—Bing Crosby being the first of the real big ones. The story of the NBC-CBS rivalry, the raids and the counter-raids, is one of the most electric chapters in the book—real cloak-and-

dagger with everyone being *so* nice. About Crosby, here's what Royal said: "Aylesworth told me to match the CBS offer of \$1,500 a week for a quarter-hour sustainer, Monday thru Friday. Then Bill Paley threw in something we couldn't—a screen test at Paramount. We didn't have an 'in' with a movie studio."

You know where the Red Network got its name? Neither did I. Here's how: "So when the telephone company first started sending radio programs down wires, NBC was called the 'Red Network' because the plugs were painted red. Later on, when the secondary network came into being, those plugs were painted blue. That was the Blue Network."

And there's a fine chapter in *It Sounds Impossible* on the Presbyterian purity of the Scot Reith who brought so much boredom to the BBC that even the British became aware of it.

Do you remember Admiral Byrd? Do you remember that WGY used to shortwave letters to the men at the South Pole from their loved ones in America? And that Jimmy Wallington used to read those letters on the air? When the Byrd Expedition came to New York, it was suggested—so Jimmy relates—that "I might like to come to New York and meet the expedition when it arrived in New York Harbor. This was a dream come true. I was sent out in a seagoing tug called *The Relief*. It was five o'clock in the morning when we met the Byrd ships 350 miles out at sea. They handed me a megaphone and I called over and asked if Commander Byrd was aboard. They said yes—and then a voice came over the water:

'Isn't that Jimmy Wallington?'

"Soon afterward," writes Sam Slate, "Jimmy Wallington found himself assigned to the biggest shows on the air: Rudy Vallee, Eddie Cantor, Rubinoff, Ed Wynn." And today? Jimmy's commercials include Seven-Up, Nu-Soft, GE Refrigerators, Du Pont, Bit-O'-Honey, and Sea Mist.

Slate and Cook, despite the fun they've had in researching and writing their Radio book, are also frequently serious. In speaking of the four major industrial developments that have altered life for Americans and for the world (they mean cars, planes, phones, and radios) they say this: "Of the four, broadcasting reached deep into mores, manners and modes so quickly that, nearly overnight, it changed table conversations, the recreation habits, the manner of speaking, the musical tastes, the appetite for information, the shopping and even the sleeping habits of the entire world. Its forcefulness changed all of show business. Its immediacy shortened the day and shrank the globe."

Every page in this astonishing history has its own special zip and quality—ranging from the irreverent to the profound. But it's all true, it all happened, and much of it is reported within the quotation marks of the men who did it and said it. *It Sounds Impossible* constitutes the clearest, though not the most flattering, reflection of ourselves that this century—up to the time of Television—is going to get. It is "must" reading for all communications classes at all levels, and for every library and every college in the country. Throw in the British Isles while you're at it.

Most of all, the book—while scrupulously accurate—is non-didactic, impertinent, not too impressed with itself, fast, clear, direct, and full of fun. It doesn't matter how long you've been with the industry; here's a history that will give you some spins you've not had before. It is as slangy and as enduring as the business itself. It is the business. And by a couple of real professionals who are still very much with it.

We now need no more books on Radio because the final word is in.

Lennen and Newell

Max Wylie

## BOOKS RECEIVED

*Audio Control Handbook, The*, by Robert S. Oringel. New York: Hastings House, Publishers, 1963.

*Contemporary Cinema, The*, by Penelope Houston. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963.

*Michelangelo Antonioni*, by Pierre Leprohon. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963.

## RECORDS

**Concert for Lovers** (United Artists UAL-3315/UAS-6315): *Eleventh Hour*.

**East Side/West Side** (Columbia CL-2123/CS-8923).

**Hennesey** (Signature SM-1049).

**Impact** (RCA Victor LPM-2042): *Black Saddle; Highway Patrol; M Squad; Mike Hammer; Naked City; Perry Mason; Peter Gunn; Racket Squad; Rawhide; Richard Diamond; Sea Hunt; Waterfront*.

**Look at Monaco, A** (Columbia CL-2019/CS-8819).

**M Squad** (RCA Victor LPM-2062).

**Magic Screen '63** (20th Century-Fox TFM-3105/TFS-4105): *Bill Dana Show; Breaking Point; Dick Van Dyke Show; Lieutenant; Mr. Novak; Phil Silvers Show*.

**Man from Interpol** (Top Rank International RM-327).

**Music from Richard Diamond** (Mercury 36162/80045).

**One Step Beyond** (DL-8970/78970).

**VIP Theme** (MGM 4184/S-4184): *Mr. Novak*.

**Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Color** (Disneyland 1245).



## LOOKING AHEAD

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He is ten and I am thirty-eight and we have often sat and watched television together, although never under such circumstances. When Ruby stepped out of the crowd to keep his meaningless appointment with destiny we watched together. We heard the shot, saw Oswald fall, and were caught up in that moment together. I told him then that one man had been shot, perhaps killed, by another—that it had actually happened as we saw and heard it. He shifted his pillow and said nothing for a moment. Then he turned to look at me as though seeking some cue. And we pondered in silence together as television returned us to the grim procession in Washington.

He grew restless as the cortege moved by. Finally he looked at me again and asked:

“Why do they have the black horse if he can’t ride it?”

“To honor his memory,” I said, “because he can’t ride anymore. It’s a way of paying him final respect. It’s symbolic—like the music.”

“But he never rode a horse when he was alive, did he?”

“No. It’s a tradition. In history great leaders always rode horses, and when one died or was killed, they put the stirrups backward on his horse as a sign of respect. We kept this tradition for our Presidents, because it’s a beautiful way of paying final honor to them.”

His small face turned back to the screen for a long while. He seemed to understand.

The barrier was broken. I knew then that what happened in that basement in Dallas—and on the sunswept street of that city two

days earlier—had fully registered upon his mind. He had crossed from events in themselves to an understanding of them. In that inexplicable way by which we finally come to *know* what a communication has said to us, the fact held no significance for him until it had been given full meaning by the symbol.

As the sight of an actual killing carried no import for a ten-year-old boy until it had been structured for him by the black horse, so the full record of those brutal moments probably held true significance for *all* of us only at a later time: perhaps when the band first played *Hail to the Chief*; or when the eulogies began; or when the flame was ignited; or when we saw the photograph of the tearful Negro boy and read Theodore H. White's poignant "Camelot" epilogue in *Life*. For the urgent, emotion-choked descriptions by TV's familiar newsmen, the views of the street and the building in Dallas, even the blurred photos of a bullet striking—all of these reflected only the cold image of an event which was not part of our understanding until symbols had made it emotionally meaningful for each of us, in one way or another, at one time or another.

This may tell us something of that unique quality of televised communication which Reuven Frank has correctly called "the transmission of experience," and which Marshall McLuhan came near to explaining in his childishly blunt and yet infinitely complex statement—"the *medium* is the message." The days of November were filled with the direct transmission of experience, as "fact" was recorded and simply passed along to us. But within the *happening* of an assassination or a murder there could be only limited symbolic reconstruction, while in the *happening* of a state funeral all

of our poetic verbal and non-verbal symbols were brought into glorious play. Television recorded both events—without interference and with a minimum of reconstruction. This is its ultimate form—not to simply mirror life, but to *extend* our senses by transmitting the great sweep of a world we are learning to see with our hearts as well as our minds.

Nor have we been given a more penetrating demonstration of the inherent dangers in mishandling this social dynamite called television. If its greatest single force rests within its capacity to extend our own sense of the universe, its greatest potential menace can arise when men fail to define the tolerances within which the presentation of actuality must work. To acknowledge that all human communication is symbolic reconstruction of the world around us is simple enough, but to bring from this an assumption that reconstruction can be made without limits—without rational frameworks—may spell social disaster.

The hand of the artist belongs in television in a variety of places and at all levels both fictional and factual, but our concern must dwell constantly upon where and how it is laid upon the record of the actual. With the full emergence of a TV documentary form, the conditions which define the role and function of the artist and the reporter in television journalism have begun to take shape. In no other medium in history are they so closely and intimately related, a circumstance arising directly from the accuracy of Philip Dunne's observation that "truth is not only stranger, but *stronger*, than fiction." It is not an accident that the dim triumphs of a

“golden age” in TV drama were rooted in the realities of modern urban life, nor is it sheer coincidence that E. G. Marshall observes that he is “a part of the community,” and that George C. Scott is besieged with advice from those who work daily at the level of raw social conflict in our communities.

No one will ever explain the mystique of the communicative process, let alone television’s unique role within it. We shall never fully understand how it is that the sight of an actual death is made meaningful to a ten-year-old boy only after he has seen it re-played in a sombre pageant of flags and drummers. But we *do* know that all who have reason and energy to apply to the solution of these mysteries must now engage in the task. The artist, the journalist, the social scientist and—above all—the philosopher must come to this medium with humility and a sharpened sense of inquiry—and they must come soon. If the emerging “schools” of communication fail to observe this desperate need—and too few show such inclination—then the professionals must assume the responsibility. Hopefully, some have already begun to move in this direction.

For we face this possibility: In the year 2,000 a typical child born into this world may spend *one-fifth of the total waking hours of his life attending to messages emanating from a television receiver*. Perhaps this explains, as we commence the third year of publication of *Television Quarterly*, why those who are associated with this journal feel some satisfaction, and hope, in what we are trying to do.

A. W. B.



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On Wednesday night, September 18, 1963, the American public saw The Patty Duke Show for the first time—and promptly fell in love with it.

Today, The Patty Duke Show is a success. Nice girls *do* finish first—and ABC is tickled pink about it.

ABC TELEVISION NETWORK 

