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**BLACK COMFORT ZONE:** Richard G. Carter

**QUALITY AND COMPETITION:** Katharine Graham

**LITERATE SITCOMS:** David Marc

**THE HDTV CHALLENGE:** Richard E. Wiley



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# HDTV: THE NEW VIDEO FRONTIER

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BY RICHARD E. WILEY

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**A** very large, flat receiver, shaped like a motion picture screen, that can be hung on the wall like a painting, and capable of delivering an image of almost photographic quality—this is the video future, this is the new frontier of American broadcasting and cablecasting, and this is so-called "high definition television" (or "HDTV"). HDTV represents, potentially, the greatest change in television since the advent of color in the early 1950's, and it could be available to our citizens sometime in the next decade.

HDTV holds the potential for greatly increased viewer enjoyment, important educational, scientific and medical benefits, and billions of dollars in income for television set manufacturers, program producers and video advertisers. In short, this new advance could offer a cornucopia of exciting new services for the public and a bonanza in new revenues for various elements of the television industry.

But with all of its glittering possibilities, HDTV will not come without a host of technical, economic and social complexities. Indeed, it could out-

mode the nation's investment of nearly 100 billion dollars in existing TV receivers, threaten the future of our terrestrial broadcasting industry, and help to entrench the United States as a second class technological and economic power (at least compared to Japan).

What is really involved here? Let me provide what is admittedly a lawyer's simplified explanation of a very highly technical subject. The television picture in this country essentially is comprised of some 525 horizontal or "scanning" lines (if you stand close to

a receiver, you can observe the lines but I don't advise trying to count them!)<sup>1</sup> and a height to width relationship (or "aspect ratio") of 4:3. As TV sets become larger and wider in the future, the image delivered—via these same 525 lines—will become more diffuse and less "defined". In this respect, note the relatively fuzzy reception available on today's 50 inch or so projection screens.<sup>2</sup> The concept of HDTV is to increase greatly the scanning lines (to perhaps 1050 or 1125) and to widen the aspect ratio (to perhaps 5:3) in order to emulate on television the clarity and proportions of 35 mm cinematography.

Now for the problems. First, and most importantly, HDTV may require more than the 6 MHz of spectrum currently allocated for each television channel. For example, the Japanese-proposed format (so-called MUSE), despite considerable advances in bandwidth compression techniques, would still require some 8.1 MHz, clearly incompatible with our existing standard ("NTSC") broadcasting. Japan and countries in Western Europe all apparently intend to institute satellite-based national broadcast operations with broadband transmission capability. But here in the U.S., with different geographical conditions (including four time-zones) and a societal commitment to stations licensed to serve *local* communities, we are not prepared to foreswear our terrestrial broadcasting system.

Moreover, 6 MHz television sets, of course, are a fixture in almost every American home. It is likely that our government will conclude that no technical improvement in the video medium can be permitted to obsolete overnight this huge "sunk" invest-

<sup>1</sup>In fact, the total of 525 lines is made up of two fields of interlaced scans of the picture.

<sup>2</sup>As a practical matter, today's picture received in the home exhibits about 240 lines of horizontal resolution, primarily because of bandwidth limitations in the receiver.

ment. Thus, "compatibility" is a major concern relative to the introduction of HDTV.

Various solutions have been suggested to deal with the 6 MHz problem. One concept is to employ a compatible 6 MHz so-called Enhanced Definition Television (EDTV) format.

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## To be competitive in the video world of tomorrow, broadcasters will need the opportunity to deliver full HDTV to their audiences.

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Advocates of EDTV, which basically involves an improvement in NTSC, contend that—given our existing universe of 6 MHz sets and given much of the public's alleged lack of concern in having the absolute "best" television picture available—this advancement would be quite acceptable at least in the short run.

On the other hand, a number of entities have proposed one and a half channel (9 MHz) and two channel (12 MHz) systems. These proponents suggest either an "augmentation approach" (supplementing an existing NTSC compatible channel with an augmentation channel) or a "simulcast approach" (employing an NTSC compatible channel and a simulcast channel with an incompatible signal). Both of these methods would be "compatible" in the sense that existing television receivers could continue to be serviced by an NTSC signal. They also would provide, so to speak, full HDTV service.

To analyze the entire issue of advanced television service,<sup>3</sup> including the 6 MHz problem, the Federal Communications Commission has estab-

<sup>3</sup>The term "advanced television service" encompasses HDTV and other forms of improved definition over the current NTSC system.

lished an Advisory Committee comprised of chief executives of leading broadcast, cable, programming and receiver manufacturing companies. This Committee (which I am privileged to chair) has produced an Interim Report to the Commission which, among other things, concludes that its efforts and those of the Commission should be focused on establishing, at least ultimately, a HDTV standard for terrestrial broadcasting. As the Committee's report states, it seems likely that viewers eventually will demand this level of reception quality and, as a result, non-broadcast media (with the capacity for broadband transmission) will attempt to offer it. Thus, to be competitive in the video world of tomorrow, broadcasters will need the opportunity to deliver full HDTV to their audiences if they are to continue to serve as an effective outlet for local service to the public.

On the basis of very preliminary engineering studies, the Advisory Committee believes and the Commission tentatively has concurred,<sup>4</sup> that there may be sufficient spectrum capacity in the current TV allocations to permit all or most existing stations to provide advanced television service through either an augmentation or simulcast approach. However, this belief is premised on an elimination of the present UHF channel separation requirements (or "taboos"), and the implementation of interference protection requirements that are substantially less than those required in the current NTSC system.

Clearly, more detailed spectrum analysis is required and the Advisory Committee and the FCC are proceeding in this direction as rapidly as possible. In the meantime, it is the Committee's view that the Commission should not reallocate UHF spectrum to other uses. At the same time,

we also have expressed the view that non-broadcast media (including cable) should be permitted to develop their own forms of enhanced delivery, as they deem appropriate and as their audiences may demand. However, since the public undoubtedly will want to see HDTV programming via both broadcast and non-broadcast outlets, the Advisory Committee has recommended that efforts should be made to develop effective and inexpensive advanced television interfaces between various media—perhaps through converter devices, or, possibly, the development of a so-called "open architecture" television receiver that, with added modules, might be able to accommodate different reception standards.

One of the interesting questions on the horizon, presaging a titanic future struggle, is whether the telephone industry should be permitted to offer HDTV. Currently, restrictions contained in the AT&T Consent Decree, the Cable Policy Act of 1984, and the FCC's cable/telephone cross-ownership rules would seem to prevent such entry into the advanced television marketplace. However, pressures are being brought to bear in all three areas and, accordingly, the situation may well change in the future. In any case, the possibilities for delivery of HDTV by fiber optic transmission, with its tremendous capacity, remain a matter

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**I believe that it would now be a mistake to rush to judgment before we have completed the necessary testing of different proponent systems.**

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of both considerable interest and controversy.

The concept of a new television standard is itself another major issue concerning the introduction of HDTV. Standard setting is a fine and some-

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<sup>4</sup>Tentative Decision and Further Notice of Inquiry in MM Docket 87-268 (Advanced Television System).

times controversial art. It is always difficult to decide if, when and by whom such a determination should be made. For example, to act too soon, before a clear understanding of all relevant factors is possible, could result in a premature freezing of developing technology. For this reason, while the United States clearly has come to the HDTV party quite late compared to other countries, I believe that it would now be a mistake to rush to judgment before we have completed the necessary testing of different proponent systems and understand better all relevant factors.

On the other hand, to act too late (or to not act at all) may be to retard the introduction of a new service into the marketplace. This may have occurred in the case of AM stereo in which the FCC, faced with choosing between four different systems, demurred in selecting a standard and, some would argue, delayed the development of a new service that AM radio very much needed.

It remains to be seen whether the marketplace will coalesce behind a preferred approach or system in the advanced TV market of the future (which, philosophically, I personally would like to see happen). But if not, then it seems to me that our government—at the right time and under the right circumstances—may want to establish a new television standard, one that hopefully would serve our country for a long period of time just as NTSC has done.

**S**till another significant problem involved in the implementation of advanced television service relates to the economic aspects of this technical innovation, especially with regard to our balance of trade with other countries. As indicated, HDTV portends a huge new industry someday (one that might be as large as \$40 billion dollars a year). However, the key question is: will there be an American involve-

ment in this new field and, if so, to what extent and in what areas.

The United States is the world's largest television market and, undoubtedly, will occupy this same position in the HDTV world of tomorrow. Under the circumstances, it does seem appropriate (as the Interim Report of the FCC's Advisory Committee recites) that our nation also should participate in the industrial, employment and creative aspects of this new advance.

Unlike the Japanese and Europeans, the U.S. essentially lacks a domestic TV receiver manufacturing base (and, indeed, much of a consumer electronics capability as well). There are those who believe that HDTV may represent

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**While the U.S. may have come rather late to the HDTV party, a host of private sector associations and corporations are today placing substantial emphasis on advanced television development.**

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an opportunity for our country to effect a renaissance in these areas. Given the relatively low margins of the set manufacturing business, however, it is uncertain how much realism there may be in this hope. At the same time, promising entrepreneurial opportunities might exist for American entities in such areas as componentry (particularly, integrated circuits), receiver assembly and, of course, video software in which we are far and away the world's leader.

To determine where we as a nation can go in the advanced television field, we should start by better understanding just where things stand now in the video marketplace. For example, where are television sets and related video equipment manufactured, where are they assembled (and by whose do-

mestic work force), and what and whose components are utilized in such devices? Most importantly, where do the economics in this business sector really lie? In this regard, does it really matter, economically, whether an American proponent system is ultimately selected as a new television standard in this country?

Fortunately, important federal governmental entities—including the Congress (particularly, the House Telecommunications and Finance Subcommittee), the Administration (especially the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration) and the FCC (primarily through its Advisory Committee) are focusing on just these kinds of issues. Moreover, a host of private sector associations and corporations are today placing substantial emphasis on advanced television development. Hopefully, all of this activity and attention will help to address the questions of what is possible and what is important relative to an American role in this future marketplace.

In the final analysis, there clearly are a myriad of complex technological, economic and policy issues that need to be resolved before it can be finally determined where this country (and, indeed, other nations as well) may be headed in the advanced television field. At this point, perhaps only one thing seems certain: we will be hearing more (and, ultimately, seeing more) about HDTV in the future. So for all of us, the message must be: stay tuned! ■

Richard E. Wiley is Chairman of the FCC's Advisory Committee on Advanced Television Service. From 1974 to 1977, Mr. Wiley served as Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, and as General Counsel from 1970 to 1972, when he was appointed as a Commissioner. A senior partner in the Washington law firm of Wiley, Rein & Fielding, he was recently recognized by *The National Law Journal* as one of the nation's 100 most outstanding lawyers. His professional practice is centered in telecommunications and information law.

## VIEWPOINT

### Headlines and Drama

*"The first thing we must accept about television docudramas is that they are inherently vulgarizations. Complaining that the form doesn't serve history misses the point. Their purpose is to process the recent past into readily-assimilated shlock. We respond to even the shallowest TV re-enactment of a barely remembered headline, not as the way it was, but as a kind of palliative folklore. Unfortunately, docudrama-makers don't seem to understand this about their audience and too often give us what we need, not what we want."*

*"Docudramas have been made about nearly every conceivable political event and personality. Yet there is one subject which epitomizes both how docudramas work as national bedtime stories and how producers get it wrong. The docudrama might have been invented to deal with the Kennedys as a phenomenon of U.S. life."*

—Tom Carson,  
American Film



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# THE WORLD OF ALDA AND HAWKEYE

The anatomy of a sitcom classic, and how a Sixties hero, in a Seventies series, set in a Fifties war, managed to deal with issues of war and peace.

BY DAVID MARC

## EDITOR'S NOTE:

David Marc's new book, *Comic Visions: Television Comedy and American Culture*, was released recently by Unwin, Hyman as part of a new series on media and popular culture. A cultural history of TV comedy, the book examines the rises and falls of genres and trends from the heyday of comedy-variety stars such as Berle, Caesar and Skelton to the current dominance of sitcoms such as Cosby and *Growing Pains*. The following is excerpted from a section which concerns the sitcom renaissance of the early 1970s, a period that saw the premiers of such groundbreaking series as *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *All in the Family* and *M\*A\*S\*H*.

**B**oth *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *All in the Family* were portents of larger studio-based aesthetics that would be expressed and refined in spin-offs and imitations for years to come. The meowing pussycat that closed every *Mary* episode came to symbolize a baby-boom-based urban professional television gestalt that would survive MTM's abandonment of situation comedy to flourish in the company's upscale designer soap operas (*Hill Street Blues*, *St. Elsewhere*) during the eight-

ies. Meanwhile, Norman Lear had established himself as the sitcom's first media-personality auteur. On the basis of his reputation as a behind-the-scenes television artist, he gradually emerged as a leading citizen's voice in American liberalism during the eighties. The man who gave the world Archie Bunker rose to challenge the Reverend Jerry Falwell during the conservative salad days of the Reagan presidency.

*M\*A\*S\*H*, however, though every bit as culturally ubiquitous as these other two sitcoms, never spawned any family of spin-offs (*AfterM\*A\*S\*H* was the one still-born attempt) or even inspired any obvious imitators of its aesthetic or ideological style. The studio that produced it, 20th-Century Fox Television, had for years been a nuts-and-bolts supplier to the networks. Its hits, including such shows as *Room 222*, *Peyton Place*, and *Batman*, were diverse in character, leaving Fox without the public face of a distinctive house imprimature. Moreover, *M\*A\*S\*H* was dominated by different key collaborators at various junctures in its production history and its authorical background never became household knowledge.

In a medium dominated by formulas based on such anti-art concepts as "least objectionability models" and "audience special effort quotients," it is perhaps difficult to see what William Self of 20th Century-Fox Televi-

sion saw in Robert Altman's film that made him believe it could be built into a successful commercial television series in the early 1970s. For starters, the film's script had been written by Ring Lardner Jr., a veteran victim of the McCarthy blacklists. Moreover, Lardner and Altman's movie had contained a wide-ranging selection of contemporary TV taboos, including four-letter words, nudity, blood-splattering open-heart surgery, and—perhaps most shocking—personae given to nihilistic musing. These could have hardly seemed attractive features at a time when CBS was still scoring well with *My Three Sons* and *The Glen Campbell Goodtime Hour*. Yet with the corporate debate raging on Sixth Avenue over how to win the hearts and pocketbooks of the burgeoning new audience of post-World War II 18-to-34 year-olds, Self managed to get a green light for development from the marketing visionaries at CBS.

Self's first move was to put a solid Tinseltown citizen, Gene Reynolds, in charge of the potentially volatile production. Reynolds' credits included work as a child star in over forty MGM films (he was among other things, one of the boys in *Boys' Town*), and behind-the-scenes credits in such baroque sitcoms as *Hennessey* (which concerned a military doctor) and *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*. Reynolds, in turn, went off to England to try to convince his old friend Larry Gelbart to come home to American television for the purpose of collaborating with him on the new Fox series. Offering Gelbart assurances of artistic freedom—and encouraging him by pointing out the exciting possibilities signaled by the very existence of the MTM and Lear projects—Reynolds persuaded Gelbart to accept the offer and the two began the job of developing *M\*A\*S\*H* for television.

Unlike *All in the Family* or *Mary Tyler Moore*, *M\*A\*S\*H* was a TV adaptation of a property that already enjoyed currency in American mythology. The 1970 feature-film *M\*A\*S\*H*,

a boldly anti-war comedy released during the height of American engagement in Vietnam, had starred Eliot Gould, Donald Sutherland and Sally Kellerman. Gould and Sutherland, as Drs. Hawkeye Pierce and Trapper John McIntyre, had brought hedonistic American college-boy summer camp pranksterism into the misery of the Korean peninsula during the early 1950s with gratifying results. By maintaining their adolescence in the midst of the relentless firestorm, they managed to keep an Americanesque spirit of rebellious independence alive. Whitmanian reverences for fellow feeling, intoxication, and orgasm were revealed ample to the task of personal survival against the mindless, steely thud of bureaucracy, blood, shrapnel, and death.

The movie had caused something of a sensation, both by winning profits for its backers and an Academy Award for the once-scorned Lardner. Though it is by no means unusual for Hollywood films to inspire sitcom adaptations, typical examples of this phenomenon in the past had included such lighthearted fluffcoms as *Gidget* and *The Farmer's Daughter*—shows that hovered comfortably near zero on the "least objectionability" Richter scale. War? Death? Amputation? Ambiguous attitudes toward the U.S. Army, the United States of America and legal authority itself? No one had yet attempted a sitcom that evoked the moods and messages of e.e. cummings' *The Enormous Room* or Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*. Was their room in the genre for the presentation of the myth of Sisyphus? Oh Lucy, what were they trying to do to you?

Larry Gelbart's resumé made him perhaps an unlikely candidate to become the leading creative force behind what would become one of TV's most formally and rhetorically daring series. As a radio writer, Gelbart had cranked out one-liners for the likes of

Fanny Brice, Baby Snooks, and Danny Thomas on *The Maxwell House Comedy Hour* on NBC radio. His only visit to Korea occurred in 1951—as a gag writer on tour with the Bob Hope U.S.O. show. Pioneering in the television goldrush of the early fifties, Gelbart found clients for his jokes among variety show personalities such as Red Buttons, Pat Boone, and Celeste Holm. In what was surely the early highlight of his television career, he had shared writers' quarters with Neil Simon, Mel Brooks, and Woody Allen on the Max Liebman *Sid Caesar* staff.

Like Simon, Gelbart made his escape from Sixth Avenue via Broadway, scoring big with the musical comedy *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* in 1962 (the very same year that Newton Minow had coined the term "vast wasteland"). Eventually choosing London for a self-imposed exile from what he had come to view as the Hollywood-Madison Avenue shlock factory, Gelbart found more satisfying work in the relatively less constrained environments of British television and film during the sixties.

A conversation with Larry Gelbart sheds some light on his decision to return to Hollywood and again become a voice in American culture. An admirer of Arthur Miller, Gelbart was an artist who had felt the sting of McCarthyism as a young writer during the fifties. Though personally unscathed, "I had seen people around me hurt—and that hurt," he recalls. Hawkeye's frequent and freewheeling jabs at McCarthy, MacArthur, and all things right of Eisenhower can be viewed in this context as the belated revenge of a generation of popular artists for the stifling effect that witch-hunting, blacklisting, and a political meanspiritedness toward art and artists had placed upon its development.

"Gene came over and we worked out the pilot in London," Gelbart continues. "We knew we had something right away; the question was, 'Would it

play?' Then Gene and Burt (Metcalfe) took care of casting on the Coast while I tied up loose ends in England."

"One early problem we faced," according to Gene Reynolds, "was how to simplify the film, how to make the story 'television-size.' The movie had featured three heroes: Hawkeye, Trapper, and Duke the Southerner. We knew that was too much for a half-hour show. For a while we even considered going with one hero, Hawkeye, and cutting both of the others. But then we figured Hawkeye needed an 'equal' to talk to—so we just dropped Duke."

In the movie, Duke starts out as an equal member of the heroic trio of free spirits he forms with the two other doctors. Hawkeye (a New Englander) and Trapper (a Westerner), however, become alienated from Duke when he reveals racist attitudes toward a black doctor named Spearchucker Jones who they import for the MASH unit's football team. Racism is rejected by Hawkeye and Trapper as weak, stupid, and evil; the racist character is exiled from the brotherhood of hedonists. The social rejection of the racist Southerner by his fellow whites, a liberal parable that would be made obsolete by George Wallace's 1968 presidential primary campaign in Wisconsin and that would disappear completely on the streets of South Boston in 1974, was the obvious choice to be cut. To maintain Duke in the sitcom, the show's creators would have had to do one of three things: rehabilitate him, make him into a kind of Archie Bunker (a doctor!), or ignore the issue. Having already exposed themselves through so many open windows of audience objectionability, Gelbart and Reynolds decided to punt on this most volatile American issue of all. Instead, all-purpose villainy, including a naive belief in racial stereotypes, would be invested in the whining, sniveling, incompetent Major Frank Burns.

At least one important new character was added to the cast. Corporal Maxwell Klinger, the reluctant draftee

from Toledo, would spend most of his eleven seasons with the 4077th bucking for a Section 8 in skirt and heels. Klinger was originally conceived of by Gelbart as a one-shot character for the

**It is difficult to get most of the people involved in *M\*A\*S\*H* to discuss the show's political content—or even the possibility that it had any. The hesitation of most television producers to speak frankly on such issues points to a legacy of McCarthyism.**

show, written into the third episode with a half-page bit. "Larry based him on Lenny Bruce's story of how he got out of the Navy by impersonating a WAVE," claims Reynolds.

Despite the obviousness of the show's politically-loaded obsessions, it is difficult to get most of the people involved in *M\*A\*S\*H* to discuss the show's political content—or even the possibility that it had any. The hesitation of most television producers to speak frankly on such issues points to a legacy of McCarthyism that continues to cast a shadow over American popular culture. Silence by *M\*A\*S\*H*'s producers—coupled with strong ratings—probably went a long way in protecting the series from censorship during its production run and in keeping it alive and healthy in off-network syndication. When pressed, the auteurs tend to deflect the politically controversial aspects of *M\*A\*S\*H*'s anti-war, anti-militarist statements to other sources of potential objectionability, especially gore and sex. For example, asked if he had ever run into policial censorship at CBS, Reynolds replied,

*The network had a number of reser-*

*vations. For one thing, there was some sentiment to not allow any Operating Room scenes. The movie had been full of them, with blood spurting all over the place. One CBS official claimed he had seen people walk out of the theater during those sequences. But we knew we had to have O.R. scenes and convinced them.*

John Rappaport, a *M\*A\*S\*H* associate producer and writer, claims that sex was always a bigger issue with network censors than was politics. As a veteran contributor to content groundbreakers ranging from *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In* to *All in the Family*, Rappaport had much experience in this regard. Reynolds, however, bristles even at this suggestion. "We were not a licentious show," he insists. "People sent us scripts all the time which had Hawkeye and B.J. doing all kinds of things with the nurses that we would have never had them do. We're just a good 'gang comedy.' We had a lot of terrific characters played by a lot of talented actors—real professionals who worked very well together."

Larry Gelbart, whose career plans were less tied to prime-time network television, doesn't quite remember it that way: "We were battling with Standards and Practices all the time. In fact I'd say that many of the episodes that centered on the doctors' troubles with military brass were metaphorically drawn from our own conflicts with the CBS brass."

Gelbart, feeling an urge to make new use of the commerical credibility he had won with the success of *M\*A\*S\*H*, left the series after the 1975-76 season to pursue other projects, including *United States* (NBC, 1980), an experimental ratings-dead series starring Beau Bridges and Helen Shaver as a sitcom couple without a laughtrack; and the smash-hit film *Tootsie*, whose script he wrote with Murray Schisgal and Elaine May. In retrospect, the Gelbart years at *M\*A\*S\*H* seem painted

with relatively broad brushstrokes.

In the early episodes, Hawkeye was a borderline alcoholic, driven by his painful circumstances to swill the beakers of medical school moonshine that he and Trapper cooked in their test-tube distillery. Like Phil Silvers' Sgt. Ernie Bilko or Ernest Borgnine's Commander Quint McHale, Alda's Captain Benjamin Franklin "Hawkeye" Pierce depended on a sharp, deviant, yet above all, humane imagination to outmaneuver the vigilant but bumbling, insensitive, incompetent brass of the U.S. Army. Hawkeye was separated from these earlier military sitcom noncom comen not only by rank and class, but by a desperate sense of mission in his battles with the bureaucracy. An unrepentant sensualist with a romantic vision of himself and his friends, Hawkeye willingly works within a system that he finds insane, asking only the single condition that he be permitted to retain control of his own soul. The only problem with this arrangement is that he is never completely convinced that the other side is capable of keeping the bargain or even knowing that it has been made.

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Carrying the legacy of James Fenimore Cooper into the post-bomb world, Hawkeye is a sitcom version of what Norman Mailer had called "the new American frontiersman" of the post-bomb world. Like the heroes of Jack Kerouac's novels, Hawkeye is torn be-

tween the responsibilities thrust upon him by the unfeeling authorities and his urge to celebrate his erotic capacity to laugh and love.

Captain Pierce combines the organic earthiness of the military sitcom's traditional working-class sergeants—Bilko, McHale, Carter (*Gomer Pyle*), O'Rourke (*F Troop*)—with the imagination, wit, and values of a well-educated, highly articulate young physician from an unpretentious small town in Maine. Though living in the fictive fifties, Hawkeye speaks in the tones of a survivor of the sixties. His fear and hatred of the war and of the dehumanizing bureaucracy that executes it create in him a harmony of self-interest and social conscience. The aims of his endless sitcom schemes are not merely to extract privileges for himself from the Army—the Bilko model—but to shelter the psychologically vulnerable, including himself, from the horror and the horror-making apparatus. A sixties hero in a seventies sitcom set in the fifties, Hawkeye's hedonism leads him not toward an obsession with personal material gain, but rather to an ethics-based social sensibility. One imagines an eighties sitcom hero such as Alex Keaton (Michael J. Fox) of *Family Ties* laughing at Hawkeye, not with him. Look at all the dumb chances he takes.

Trapper John (Wayne Rogers) while an ideological ally to Hawkeye, provides a stylistic contrast to his sardonic wit. Trapper, and later B.J., are pensive Ethels to Alda's expressive Lucy, acting as sounding boards for Hawkeye and as confederates in his schemes. Lt. Colonel Henry Blake (McLean Stevenson), the 4077th's reluctant commanding officer, dreams of returning to his Midwest medical practice, his country club, and even his unfaithful wife. He is a synthesis of familiar sitcom C.O.s. As inept as McHale's Navy's Captain Binghamton, he is every bit as sympathetic as Bilko's Colonel Hall. Father Francis Mulcahy (William Christopher), the camp's

all-purpose religious advisor, betrays signs of Ethical Culture beneath his Catholic collar in his admiration for the godless samaritan surgeons. Company Clerk Radar O'Reilly (Gary Burghoff) is a shy Iowa farm boy trying to grow into manhood in the middle of a war. Like Father Mulcahy, he is put off by Hawkeye's bawdiness, but not so much that an alien style blinds him from the heretic substance of Hawkeye's humor in a world where the will to laugh is the will to live.

Ideologically, all of the above are united in a secular humanist popular front against the military martinets. Major Margaret "Hot Lips" Houlihan (Loretta Swit) and Major Frank Burns (Larry Linville) are presented as flag-waving, hyperpatriotic "regulation" creeps. Constantly exposing themselves as hypocrites and shameless brown-nosers, Hot Lips and Frank are little more than wooden stereotypes in the early episodes, straw men for the righteous, progressively thinking prankster/surgeon heroes. Reynolds calls Hot Lips and Burns in the pre-1977 episodes "obstacles which Hawkeye and Trapper could bump into."

The camp public address system ("Due to incoming wounded, tonight has been cancelled.") is the show's ironic narrator, a disembodied arbiter of the fate of all concerned. Nothing can stop the relentless human tragedy which has no respect for poker games, romance, a bottle on a cold night, or unbearable fatigue. The army itself, pursuing no comprehensible object in a conflict whose meaning is vague and abstract (but whose meaninglessness is only too readily available), occasionally shells the 4077th by accident. A wounded North Korean soldier stumbles into the camp, showing equal mystification at the purpose of the war as he is healed by the good doctors. Beneath the military uniforms on both sides stand hapless civilians who continually reassert their right and ability to seek happiness—with a joke, with a kiss—in a nightmarish combat zone

that is as dangerous to the soul as it is to the body. Hawkeye's bottomless supply of wisecracks in the face of all this makes the Alda character a kind of self-reflexive marginal narrator. Like Groucho in a Marx Brothers film, he is such a magnet for audience identification that every close-up of him suspends dramatic development and becomes direct address to the viewer.

*M\*A\*S\*H* went through many transitions as the production team, the cast, and the culture that had bestowed Nielsen success upon it continued to change throughout the seventies. Gelbart had pushed for formal experiments, cajoling the network to try episodes without laughtracks and to present black-and-white half-hours on its "full color" schedule. His last and, by his own estimation, finest episode depicted the regulars as they were interviewed for a mock 1953 newsreel documentary. In a scene recalling Whitman's Civil War poems, Father Mulcahy tells the camera about warming his hands on a cold morning in the heat rising from the dead bodies. This kind of poetic stab at the eternal and universal distinguished Gelbart's equally didactic situation comedy from the clumsily energetic headline sensationalism of the Norman Lear shows. Collectively, Gelbart and Lear, though different in style, had done a remarkable job of carrying the ideological mantle of Adlai Stevenson into the popular imagination of an increasingly conservative decade.

**E**arly *M\*A\*S\*H*, running on television concurrently with the War in Vietnam, is indeed of an ideological piece with *All in the Family*. But after the fall of Saigon and the departure of Gelbart, *M\*A\*S\*H* came to be dominated by its new executive producer, Burt Metcalfe, and its ever-more-powerful star, Alan Alda. As a result, the concerns of the series increasingly inhabited MTM territory. Interpersonal relationships gradually shoved Amer-

ican foreign policy issues to the textual margins; a sixties revisionist history of the fifties gave way to a seventies revisionist history of the sixties. The ways in which cast changes were handled were perhaps the most visible reflections of this shift.

Many of the regulars, their pockets stuffed with *M\*A\*S\*H* money, set off to find starring vehicles of their own. Between 1975 and 1979, McLean Stevenson, Wayne Rogers, Larry Linville and Gary Burghoff all left the show, taking Colonel Blake, Trapper John, Frank Burns, and Radar with them. The replacements of these characters were not merely new actors in the old roles or substitute stereotypes, but instead a set of completely new characters who added accruing layers of social complexity to the narrative.

To replace Frank Burns as the odd-doctor-out, Metcalfe came up with Major Charles Emerson Winchester, a snooty Boston blueblood surgeon who had little patience for the antics or ideas of his egalitarian tentmates. Metcalfe tailored the role for actor David Ogden Stiers and handed it to him without an audition. "Frank Burns had become the convenient, easy joke—a totally cartoon character," recalls Metcalfe. "Winchester would embody everything Frank Burns did not; he'd be a fine surgeon, a formidable adversary for Hawkeye, with a bit of William F. Buckley in him that separated him from the rest of the guys." If Burns had been a vulgar red-neck racist, Winchester was merely ethno-centric in a WASPish kind of way. If Burns was a sexual hypocrite (a married man, he was pretentiously pious in public, but apt to jump on Hot Lips whenever he thought no one was looking), Winchester expressed a sincere Victorian reverence for women. An articulate appreciator of the fine arts—a man of *Kultur*—Winchester, while not exactly the stuff of sitcom heroes, stood head and shoulders above the whining, repulsive Burns.

Captain B.J. Hunnicut (Mike Farrell)

takes Trapper's cot on the sympathetic side of the tent. Farrell's B.J., far from the devil-may-care playboy of Wayne Rogers' Trapper, is a tragically absent husband and father—a serious idealist rather than a skirt-chasing cynic. His one brief camp romance is characterized by intense self-reexamination and even self-recrimination, both major themes of the later *M\*A\*S\*H*. B.J. generally and genuinely appreciates Hawkeye's sense of humor, but he is also capable of telling Hawkeye when to get off, of letting him know when he has gone too far, when his pranks have become insensitive or even cruel. He becomes a conscience for a character who during the Gelbart years was himself the paragon of conscience.

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**Having played Officer Bill Gannon, Jack Webb's sidekick on the late-sixties *Dragnet* revival, Morgan retains the arguable distinction of having been a regular on both the most conservative and the most liberal shows ever to appear on the networks.**

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After Henry Blake wins his release from the army (he promptly dies when his helicopter is shot down on the first leg of the journey back home), Colonel Sherman Potter (Harry Morgan) becomes the camp's new commanding officer. Potter, a Missouri-born doctor and an Army-lifer with credentials going back to World War I, does the most to defuse the volatile polarization between the army regulars and the reluctant draftees that had powered Altman's film and the Gelbart TV episodes. Potter's revulsion at war and his sense of humor are capacities that had been previously reserved strictly for the anti-military forces. Harry Morgan, giving the role equal doses of

Harry Truman and sitcom papa, is a TV veteran whose career parallels that of the medium itself. Having played Officer Bill Gannon, Jack Webb's sidekick on the late-sixties *Dragnet* revival, Morgan retains the arguable distinction of having been a regular in both the most conservative and the most liberal shows ever to appear on the networks.

Of equal importance to the new characters are the changes that take place among the surviving cast members. Hawkeye kicks the beaker and learns a few lessons about sexism as Alan Alda becomes the nonconformist who Middle America can trust during the seventies. Alda, who had called the early Hawkeye "a sexual Archie Bunker," asserted his newly gained authorship rights by gradually clamping down on Hawkeye's libido. Like President Jimmy Carter, the post-1976 Hawkeye may show signs of "lust in his heart," but an emerging sense of guilt born out of a new definition of sexual politics begins to prevent him from acting too impetuously upon it. A committed crusader for the ill-fated Equal Right Amendment during the late seventies, Alda found himself the darling of women's magazines, from *Good Housekeeping* to *Ms.* By 1977 he had become so popular that he tied John Wayne for the highest Q-Score among all television personalities, a statistic that points to an interesting polarization of the national audience in matters of gender propriety.

Supporting characters evolved as well. Father Mulcahy, though a Catholic priest, develops non-priestly emotional traits, doubting his calling in selected episodes and even surviving a near brush with romance. Klinger, taking over as company clerk after Radar's departure, takes off his dress and finally accepts the immutable reality of his hitch. Some of the most poignant of the later episodes involve the sexually born-again Hawkeye's relation-

ship with the most changed character of all, Margaret (no longer "Hot Lips") Houlihan, who gradually sheds the cardboard stereotype of the military iron maiden and becomes a three-dimensional, at times even sympathetic, human being.

Margaret's transition comes in the wake of her marriage to Lt. Colonel Donald Penobscott, which falls apart during the couple's Tokyo honeymoon and eventually ends in divorce. Hawkeye had lusted after her since the earliest sitcom episodes—since the movie, since the novel—but this crude passion is resolved in a climactic moment for the entire series when the two of them are pinned down under enemy fire, convinced of their impending deaths. They fall into each other's arms, their mutual fear of mortality wiping away the years of rivalry and animosity. They make love. Waking the next morning—still alive—they realize that they simply don't have much more to give each other physically. The tension that has been separating them for years is spent in a single night. A gulf has been bridged; they become friends. Nothing like it had happened on a television series before.

Appropriately enough, a shrink, Captain Sidney Freedman (Alan Arbus), was added to the cast, filling the role of modern confessor that eluded the sincere but hopelessly outdated Father Mulcahy. Psychological introspection established itself as *M\*A\*S\*H*'s primary text during the late seventies. Personal madness replaced the insanity of the bureaucracy as the main villain, though the former was still often spurred by the latter. Appropriately enough, the final episode, a two-hour extravaganza, finds Hawkeye over the psychotic borderline as the Treaty of Pan Mon Jung is signed. It seems as if the tiny cell of humanity within him that contains his sense of humor, his compassion, and his reason will fall one episode short of surviving the war. Despite all, however, *M\*A\*S\*H* is a comedy. The test of valor in the 4077th

is the ability to remain a wiseguy under any circumstances. With the help of his friends, Hawkeye passes this test one last time. He proclaims his sanity and the series ends.

**D**uring the first three decades of national commercial telecast, the bulk of program production consisted largely of works derived from older arts, especially radio, theater, and cinema. The success in the 1970s of prime time sitcoms such as *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *All in the Family*, and *M\*A\*S\*H* constituted the flowering of this protovideo aesthetic. All the things that had upset English teachers so deeply about *I Love Lucy*, *Bewitched*, and *Gilligan's Island* had been addressed and improved in these sitcoms and their spin-offs. Did not Mary, Archie and Hawkeye display rich characterization? Had not witty repartee supplanted cardboard one-liners? Were not racism, sexism, generational conflict, war and peace, existential ma-

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**Rod Serling and Paddy Chayefsky had self-consciously aspired to the status of Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller during the "Golden Age" of live teleplays, but they had barely transcended midculture when anthology drama was abruptly cancelled by the networks.**

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laise, and finding the right apartment issues of sufficient depth to engage contemporary literati? Was there not, in each case, evidence of a humane soul at the narrative rudder? Even if the very existence of the commercials had blackballed the genre from ad-

mission to the genteel country club of fine arts, situation comedy at least had demonstrated a heretofore unseen civility. During the previous quarter century of *I Married Joan* and *Mr. Ed*, *Petticoat Junction* and *Hazel*, *F Troop* and *I Dream of Jeannie*, who would have thought the savage capable of even this?

But as so often happens in the Bomb world, positivist visions of spiraling progress droop without warning into craters of entropy. If the waning of the literate sitcom was sudden, the hasty decline of a developing artform was nothing new to television. In the early fifties Caesar, Berle and Kovacs had knocked on the door of Chaplin, Keaton, and Lloyd, but were denied space in the pantheon of American mass culture clowns as their genre went into abrupt commercial free-fall before they could bring it to maturity. Barely a decade after its premiere, the comedy-variety show was already fading from view; the silent cinema, by contrast, had flourished for more than thirty years before its technological double-cross at the hands of the talkies. Similarly, Rod Serling and Paddy Chayefsky had selfconsciously aspired to the status of Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller during the "The Golden Age" of live teleplays, but they too had barely transcended midculture when their entire genre—anthology drama—was abruptly cancelled by the networks.

The producers of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *All in the Family*, and *M\*A\*S\*H* saw an opening for their work in the industry's confusion over baby-boomer marketing strategy at the end of the 1960s. They accepted the formal terms of the network sitcom—thirty minutes in four segments, audience response track, ultra-slick production values, etc.—and rushed in to attempt the neat trick of a literate comedy of manners in a genre that had become synonymous with the decline of literacy. Playing against the sitcom's historical barrenness, they proved that

content—in the form of broad brush-stroke writing—could energize even the most banal of forms.

Though their artistic and commercial success was astounding, it did not bring about the sitcom millenium. Far from signaling the dawning of a new age, the literate sitcoms of the seventies might more accurately be pictured as the thrash of a dinosaur's tail. By the end of the decade, Gary Marshall's selfconscious return-to-normalcy trilogy—*Happy Days*, *Laverne and Shirley*, and *Mork and Mindy*—had replaced the litcoms at the top of the Nielsen heap. More importantly, the Marshall shows soon established themselves as the state-of-the-art models to be imitated.

Anxiety-provoking problems such as generational polarization, racism, and U.S. foreign policy were washed away by the cartoon Levittownism of the Cunninghams. Meathead's rebelliousness on social issues gave way to The Fonz instructing youth on the advantages of holding a library card. The urbane chit-chat of Mary and Rhoda was drowned out by the high-decibel shrieking of Laverne and Shirley. The brazen political didacticism of *Maude* deteriorated into the painfully cute reports on human frailties that Mork delivered to Orson from Boulder, Colorado at the conclusion of each *Mork and Mindy* episode. The no-exit hell of Hawkeye Pierce brightened into the Southern California lifestyle options of Jack Tripper. ■

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David Marc, a professor in the American Studies Department at Brandeis University, is well known for his perceptive studies of television, and for his writing about popular culture. His previous book *Demographic Vistas: Television in American Culture* has become a standard in its field. He is a frequent contributor to *The Village Voice* and *The Atlantic Monthly*.

## “QUOTE UNQUOTE”

### Getting Too Graphic?

*"Sometimes graphics should be seen and not heard. If that seems self-evident, try watching the Olympics. NBC's current Olympic coverage is packaged with computer graphics that are not only garishly loud (and out-of-key), but so astonishingly bad that even I—a 'sports ignorer'—was forced to take notice. Perhaps that was the intent, but it backfires. Who can pay attention to uneven parallel bars when there are little metallic, paper-clip gymnasts swinging across the screen? . . ."*

*"Instead of watching the Olympic events, I ended up spending all my viewing time thinking up glib names like compu-tacky and clip-art graphics to describe the mess before me. Pictorial realism in computer graphics, unless it's extremely sophisticated, has a tendency to look like mathematically precise paint-by-the-numbers. And in this case it falls prey to those dreaded design C-words: clunky and corny . . ."*

—Melanie Pitts,  
*Village Voice*



WIND IN THE WILLOWS



RUMPOLE OF THE BAILEY



THE WORLD AT WAR



THE BENNY HILL SHOW



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A HARD ACT TO FOLLOW



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# TV's BLACK COMFORT ZONE FOR WHITES

The case for fewer sugar-coated comedies about blacks and for more programs of substance and relevance. The author says "There has never been a hit 'black' series that wasn't a comedy, or more comedy than drama."

BY RICHARD G. CARTER

**W**hat does Jesse want?" asked the white politicians and pundits stupefied at what they considered the aberration of Rev. Jackson's success at the polls last spring. And because the vast majority of black and white Americans believe just about everything they read in newspapers and magazines, hear on the radio or see on television—especially whites when it comes to blacks—they asked too.

The question, of course, was racist. It really meant several things. To wit: What in the hell does this black preacher think he's doing? The nerve of him, trying to become president. Does he really think the American people (a.k.a. white folks) would accept a black man in the White House? You give 'em a foot and they take a mile. Stuff like that.

Ironically, the very same question could be asked—only far more legitimately—of the millions of black Americans who watch, on the average, far more television than whites. What do black folks want? Out of their

TV, that is. And the answer would be more. Much, much more. More, that is, of substance. And relevance.

What this means is to escape the popular perception—yours, that is—of what our place really is. You know. You like to see us joke and dance and sing and to make you laugh. But never—uh-uh—to take us seriously. Like on a dramatic TV show that addresses gut issues about relations between blacks and blacks, and blacks and whites in a positive, yet entertaining way. Uh-uh, again. You can handle Sherman Helmsley but not Jim Brown. You flip over Flip Wilson but flee from Fred Williamson. You groove on Michael Jackson but gag on Don King.

Wait just a minute there, you say. What about *The Cosby Show*? What more could we possibly want? It's numero uno. A-number one, top of the heap. And it presents a positive image of black folks. What is it with you people?

OK, I'll tell you. It's like this. I don't know a single black person—and I know thousands—who doesn't admire Bill Cosby for his talent. And for his ability to make money which, after all, is the greatest talent of them all. And

we appreciate his show. Since we've got so little, we'd be crazy not to. But black folks, by and large, are pretty smart. That being the case, we know why *The Cosby Show* is so popular with whites. It's because Cosby and his TV family stay in their place—albeit a distinctly phony one—and don't threaten whites.

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**Cosby's TV blacks never discuss issues of real importance to real blacks. Like housing, job discrimination, unemployment, poverty or the devastation the drug epidemic has heaped on many black communities.**

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Cosby's character on the show is the perfect, upscale professional black man who makes sure his perfect, upscale family never strays and never causes anyone any trouble. I mean, these black people—these Huxtables—are just too good to be true. The parents aren't on welfare and they don't use food stamps. They not only work every day, they have super jobs. The kids don't rob or mug or steal or have babies out of wedlock. They go to the best schools. The whole family behaves, for the most part, like you do. Like white folks. Cutesy-pooh.

In essence, what *The Cosby Show* does is offer its millions of white viewers a black comfort zone. Whites feel safe when they watch it. Like watching *Ozzie and Harriet*—which is pretty much the way I'd describe Bill Cosby's character—a kind of black Ozzie Nelson, spending all his time walking around acting fatherly and solving problems. Well la, de, da.

And Cosby's TV blacks never discuss issues of real importance to real blacks. Like housing, job discrimina-

tion, unemployment, poverty or the devastation the drug epidemic has heaped on many black communities. How long do you think advertisers would stand for that sort of thing? And how long do you think "Cosby" would be top-rated if real life penetrated the sacchrine spewed out on the show? The answer to both is not very long.

And just because a show is high in the ratings doesn't necessarily mean it's worth the time to watch. Remember *The Beverly Hillbillies*? Furthermore, less than two years ago, William F. Buckley, divined that racial prejudice is not increasing in America, based on Cosby's ratings. "A nation simply does not idolize members of a race that nation despises," blabbered Buckley.

I suggested at the time that he run that by the black citizens who tried to walk peacefully through Forsyth County, Georgia. Speaking of Forsyth, one of the few times Oprah Winfrey managed to coax some applause out of her all-white audience during a live broadcast from Forsyth County was when she asked how many watched *The Cosby Show*. Which proves even white bigots will watch blacks on TV if they act white.

Black people are about a whole lot more than what you see on TV—even the TV news, which dwells on negatives about blacks with the same fervor *The Cosby Show* goes overboard in the other direction. But enough about Cosby (whom I respect and admire) and his show—a sugar-coated confection I can take or leave.

My concerns with the way blacks are presented on TV go much deeper. I believe "black" shows such as Cosby's help camouflage the hopelessness felt by millions of blacks in this country—even those who are said to have "made it."

Black people are special—a hardy bunch. We have to be in order to have put up with, and continue to put up with, all manner of indignities. It takes something special to get along in

America if you're black. Something of which the vast majority of whites aren't remotely aware. As a consequence, our popular persona among the white majority populace—as in South Africa—isn't at all accurate. And television is one of the chief culprits.

**I**believe the major concern of the silent majority of black people, who do not possess a forum such as I do to express their views, is simply this: Whites see us as they want to see us, not as we really are. And it was ever thus. To illustrate, let's take a look back.

Remember, *Julia*, the series starring the lovely Diahann Carroll? She was a widowed nurse who worked hard to provide for her young son. They lived in an apartment building run by a kindly white superintendent and, each week, proved the meek do, indeed, inherit the earth. Especially if they're black and well-behaved.

A few years later, another successful "black" show, *Sanford and Son*, was born. It was followed by winning series such as *Good Times*, a spinoff of *Maude*, and *The Jeffersons*, which was derived from *All in the Family*. Then came *Benson* a little bit of fluff about a black butler, which made the grade. *What's Happening* and *What's Happening Now*, were modest hits. Others, including a black version of *The Odd Couple*, *Baby, I'm Back*, and *That's My Mama*, were not as fortunate.

Nonetheless, a serviceable formula for a successful "black" series on television had been hit upon. Portray black people in a way that would be acceptable to the millions of potential purchasers (whites) of advertised products. That is, non-threatening and willing to "stay in their place." It had worked years before on radio and early TV with *Amos 'n' Andy* and *Beulah*, so why not now?

After all, what white viewer would be threatened by, or take offense at, a hard-working nurse who wanted only

to make a better life for herself and her son? And although occasionally finding himself in the middle of some impossible situation involving whites, everyone knew Fred Sanford (played by Redd Foxx) would outwit himself in the end.

The Chicago ghetto-dwellers in *Good Times*, whose titular head was Florida (Esther Rolle), the former housekeeper on *Maude*, simply were no match for society, especially after the father (John Amos) disappeared from the cast. And as in *The Jeffersons*, with Isabel Sanford holding forth as Louise, a stereotypical strong black woman effectively dilutes any semblance of strength by the black male lead.

About the worst George Jefferson (Sherman Helmsley) could do was put his foot in his mouth or botch an order for pressed pants. Certainly nobody could take him seriously—not even his housekeeper.

And Benson? Well, we just loved him in *Soap*, right? So why not cart him off to the governor's mansion and let him have a shot at some big-time butlering? No harm, no threat, correct? And despite the generally good reviews of the recent *Frank's Place*, it's a comedy not a drama.

It would be pointless here to include cute little Gary Coleman of *Diff'rent Strokes*, and Emmanuel Lewis of *Webster*, because these cuddly, innocent pickaninnies automatically appeal to the sympathies of white viewers, which is what advertisers want because they know it sells. Nothing profound to be found, however.

**T**he bottom line is this: There has never been a hit "black" television series that wasn't either a comedy or more comedy than drama. In other words, there has never been a successful black show with a serious story line, period. Never. The reason? White people are uncomfortable with serious black people—in real life and on TV.

On the other hand, failed TV series

dealing with black folks generally have attempted to present them as strong characters who do not appear in "typical" black roles. Remember?

There was *East Side, West Side*, a masterful look at social workers in New York in the early '60s. But its black stars, Cicely Tyson and James Earl Jones, displayed some intestinal fortitude and the show's fate was sealed after a short run. This, despite the presence in the cast of George C. Scott.

Later, Jones' *Paris* and *The Lazarus Syndrome*, starring Louis Gossett Jr., who went on to win an Academy Award, also bit the dust. In the former, a black man was a no-nonsense police detective, while in the latter, a black man was a dedicated physician.

Of the current shows featuring black actors in serious roles perhaps *Miami Vice*, with Phillip Michael Thomas, is the biggest hit. But in no way does this one have a black bent. And neither did *Hill Street Blues* nor *Magnum P.I.*, nor a few other, less noteworthy programs. To have a shot at TV series success, we've got to be funny.

**T**his needs fixing—and fast. Why can't we have a black-oriented (or totally black) dramatic series? Why can't we see hard-working, positive thinking black people dealing with life the way we have seen white people do on countless shows since the inception of television? It wouldn't have to be a downer, you know. As a matter of fact, it could be downright uplifting.

The lack thereof can't be for lack of good black actors. No way. There are many out there, people with excellent dramatic skills who are seen only occasionally these days. People such as Dick Anthony Williams, Moses Gunn, Rosalind Cash, Clarence Williams III, Gloria Foster, Ivan Dixon, Bill Gunn, Lynn Moody, Michael Wright, Greg Morris, Al Freeman Jr., Yaphet Kotto, Robert Hooks, Antonio Fargas, Moses Gunn, D'Urville Martin, Ivan Dixon, Paul Benjamin, Bernie Hamilton, Ju-

lius Harris, Calvin Lockhart, Lincoln Kilpatrick, Pam Crier, Paula Kelly, Morgan Freeman, Richard Roundtree, Max Julian, Janet MacLachlan, Glynn Turman, Virginia Capers, Leonard Jackson, Vonetta McGee, Tracy Reed, Raymond St. Jacques, Dorian Harewood, Albert Hall, Larry Fishburne, Lynne Hamilton, Brock Peters, Lola Falana, Art Baker, Denzel Washington, Abbey Lincoln, James McEachin, Irene Cara—and many more.

So there's no shortage of talent. But the stereotyped, comedic "black" series (as opposed to dramatic) is only a portion of what's wrong with TV to thinking black people. As I said, we want more that is different. More of substance and relevance. Much, much more. Like respect. Here's some food for thought. Some things to consider.

The ongoing racial typecasting that pervades television—the sort of action that perpetuates the racist myth that "all blacks look alike"—is a graphic case in point. Some offensive examples that come to mind were in a 1984 TV movie on the life of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.—a man whose memory will forever be cherished by millions of black Americans.

The dark-skinned Cicely Tyson was cast as the light-skinned Coretta Scott King, and the dark-skinned Howard E. Rollins Jr. appeared as the light-skinned Rev. Andrew Young. The former was so ludicrous that it necessitated one of the worse makeup jobs in TV history—lightening Tyson for the part. This was so disconcerting that many black people with whom I talked at the time found it difficult to concentrate.

And, of course, neither Tyson nor Rollins looks anything like the famous black people they were portraying. Fortunately, that wasn't the case of Paul Winfield, who played Dr. King. There was a noted facial resemblance, but this was effectively negated because of the difference in height: Winfield is 6-feet-3, and Dr. King was 5-feet-9.

Other examples of employing non-lookalike blacks in biographical TV movies, include Winfield (again) as Roy Campanella, former baseball great, and Bernie Casey as Joe Louis in a film about the German fighter, Max Schmeling.

One bit of horrible black casting for a TV movie that was talked about but, fortunately, hasn't come to pass, is that of my boyhood friend from Milwaukee, singer Al Jarreau, as the late, great Nat "King" Cole. While Jarreau, a musical genius, certainly has the voice and all around talent for the part, he looks nothing at all like Cole. Worse yet, Cole's complexion was very dark, while Jarreau's is very light. This would be tantamount to using a white actor with blond hair to play a famous historical figure with black hair. Unthinkable. Thus, to believe Jarreau in the Cole role would require a stretch of the imagination few viewers—black or

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**Acting parts of any kind are so difficult for blacks to come by that many fine actors usually take what is offered—to earn a living, gain exposure, and, perhaps, to advance their careers.**

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white—could comfortably make.

Not so with most biographical TV movies about whites, where true look-alikes (made up or not) are cast: Such as Loni Anderson for Jayne Mansfield; Ed Flanders (Harry S. Truman); Edward Herrmann (Franklin D. Roosevelt); Dolph Sweet (J. Edgar Hoover); Rip Torn (Richard Nixon), and William Devane (John F. Kennedy), ad infinitum.

But if the insensitive casting of blacks in biographical parts on television grates so much on our hearts and minds, then why, you might ask, do black performers accept such roles?

The answer is simple, just as it always has been—even in the old days when Lincoln Theodore Perry, a.k.a. Stepin Fetchit, disgracefully bowed and scraped in the movies: To get work.

Acting parts of any kind are so difficult for blacks to come by that many fine actors usually take what is offered—to earn a living, gain exposure and, perhaps, even advance their careers.

What is really incredible is that those (mostly white) who cast TV programs apparently think black people are either unaware of this sort of thing or are just so happy about seeing a TV show about black folks that they'll accept anything, regardless how ludicrous. Yet, television, as we all know, is the big, all-seeing eye into our culture. Therefore, it should offer us a microcosm of American life.

But it doesn't. TV, for the most part, depicts life as it is lived by the majority white population. Why? Because it's good business. It's what big advertisers, who pay for the programming, say they want.

As long as this lasts, TV will not become the mirror of our lives it is capable of. Will not offer the realistic insights into life that would be so beneficial to so many. Will not become something blacks and whites can use to see how the other half really lives.

This will last as long as blacks are largely used on TV as objects to laugh at, or with—even on *The Cosby Show*. Speaking again of this program, because so many whites regard it as the "end all" for TV about blacks, let me share a few comments gleaned on the streets of Manhattan for my newspaper column early this year. This was a few days after Bill Cosby's ill-advised defense of the nonsensical utterances about blacks by TV sports commentator Jimmy (The Greek) Snyder.

Black man: "Cosby blew it. He showed his true colors, just like that television show of his. He's stone wannabe white."

White man: "Jimmy The Greek talked pure hokum. But thinking how Cosby presents life on his show—all peaches and cream—I guess he's (Cosby) pretty predictable."

Black woman: "Why kid ourselves? Cosby's TV thing has always been out of touch with the black experience. I don't live like that. No one I know lives

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**Everyone knows how  
much we love sports on  
TV, so why not let us see  
some of us in the booth  
telling us about all those  
black players in action?**

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like that except for a few white friends. I mean, they never talk about black problems on *The Cosby Show*."

Black man: "Bill Cosby is God's gift to the white man in these troubled times. Whites know if they watch his program, ain't nobody gonna demand nothing from them."

White man: "I love escapist TV like that lightweight show of his."

OK, so some folks don't seem to dig the Cos any more—at least not as many as previous years. But that's television. Even *Gunsmoke* got old. Meanwhile, black folks have other TV fish to fry.

For example, how about the dearth of black announcers for National Basketball Association games—a sport in which some 77% of the players are black? Or on National Football League telecasts—where more than half the players are black? Everyone knows how much we love sports on TV, so why not let us see some of us in the booth telling us about all those black players in action? Is this fair? Need I ask?

All of this presents an interesting dilemma for black viewers—you know, the folks who spend so much time in front of the tube and whose intelligence is constantly insulted with mindless comments about "white

knucklers" and commercials about sun tan lotion. Should we continue to accept everything offered on television without question of comment like we've accepted the old-style Democratic party Lo, these many years? Or should we throw in together and opt for something new and better for us, like the Rev. Jesse Jackson?

Should we occasionally tune out the TV—along with commercial messages of all those big money sponsors? These questions are worth our time to consider. And they're also worth the time of the predominantly white movers and shakers who decide what it is we see. Any answers out there? ■

Richard G. Carter is a columnist and editorial writer for the *New York Daily News*. A graduate of Marquette University's College of Journalism, he was a reporter for the *Columbus Dispatch*, the *Milwaukee Journal* and the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* before switching to a career in public relations. He held executive PR positions with Ohio Bell Telephone, IBM, and Con Edison, and served as Public Affairs Director of Group W Cable before returning to journalism. In 1986 he received Marquette University's Byline Award for distinguished achievement by an alumnus.



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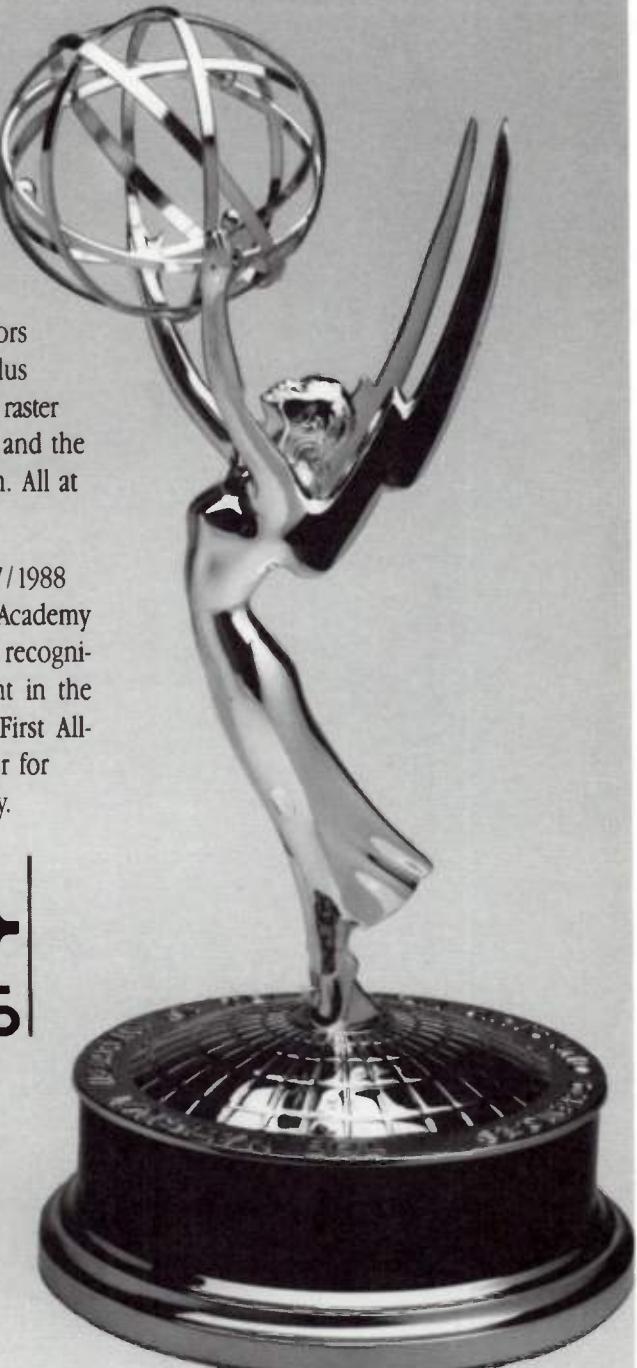
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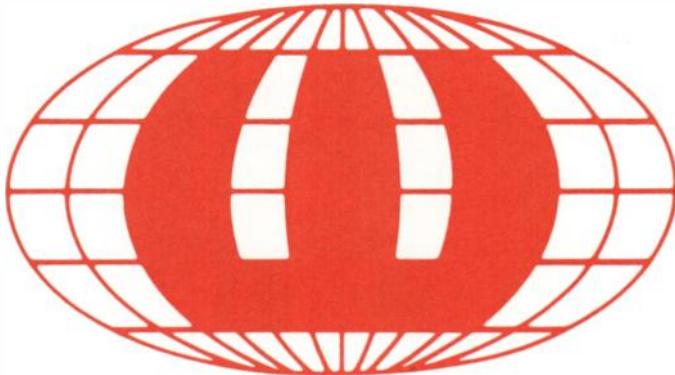
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# the little studio that could

BY ALLAN H. KALMUS

**O**nce upon a time in Television-land, there was a studio at NBC called 3-H. It isn't there anymore but the ghosts of that famous little studio still cast a giant shadow.

For it was there that television was, in effect, born. Sure, during the gestation period prior to World War II there were many experimental broadcasts; and sure, President Roosevelt became the first chief executive, in 1939, to use the new medium to open the World's Fair; and sure, Bulova Watch was the first official "sponsor," paying \$4.00 for the air time and another \$5.00 for facilities charges in what was TV's first spot announcement.

But it wasn't until January 1944, when Studio 3-H began operations as the first fully equipped television facility in the country, that the medium really took off. It was nestled on the third floor of the RCA (now GE) Building in Rockefeller Center, part of Radio City. Actors, later to become stars, got their start at 3-H; advertisers, later to spend

tens of millions of dollars a year, tried out their first TV commercials; the whole range of theatrical productions, and prize-winning playwrights, suddenly became available to audiences in their own homes—and the picture-and-word medium was on its way.

This "little studio that could" isn't there by name anymore, but it is part of nearby Studio 3-K, into which 3-H was merged in 1952. And it is now the home of NBC's prized *Nightly News*. Next door is the *Today* show, in Studio 3-B. What became of the intervening lettered studios (C,D,E,F,G,I and J), is not known.

Charlton Heston, Gregory Peck, Grace Kelly, Eva Marie Saint, Jack Lemmon, Marlon Brando, John Forsythe, E. G. Marshall, Hume Cronyn . . . were among the many young actors in the mid 1940's who got their first important roles doing televised adaptations of major dramatic works.

One of the first productions mounted for television in Studio 3-H was a three-part adaptation of Robert Sherwood's *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*. Each of the three acts was televised on successive weeks

not because it was projected as a mini-series, but because the actors simply could not have survived three nights in a row under the unbearably hot lights.

In Studio 3-H, at the beginning, the cameras were called "iconoscopes," an invention which made modern television possible. These cameras were behemoths. They needed several men to move them, and so many lights that male actors were asked to wear dark suits so the perspiration would not show through. Each camera had but one fixed lens.

Despite the intense heat, it is said that in all the years Kraft sponsored its *Television Theater*, not one patty of butter or slice of cheese melted in the kitchens on the set of 3-H.

**T**hen as now, New York was the creative capital of the country. As a result, there was access to Broadway and the theatrical community that made it possible for young actors, and even stars, to be attracted to the new medium. It didn't pay much, but it was an excellent training ground, particularly for those actors who could see its potential.

A case in point is Nina Foch, a busy actress in those days. Because Studio 3-H was small and constantly active, plays were frequently rehearsed in other locations. One of these rehearsal halls was a former gym and boxing arena on the west side of Manhattan—a sort of bush-league Madison Square Garden, called St. Nicholas Arena. An origination point for remote boxing matches, it was also a rehearsal facility for NBC.

When it wasn't being used for boxing, this arena—which retained the smell and feel of a smoke-filled caucus room at a political convention—was used for television run-throughs. Ms. Foch was once asked by a fellow actor in an NBC elevator where she and the cast had been rehearsing. "In that darling St. Nicholas Arena," she replied.

Such was the nature of early television that 3-H would often see three weeks' production being rehearsed in three different parts of the studio at the same time. And that night one of the three would go on the air.

In those days, there were no videotapes, no re-takes, no up-links, no Chyron, Quantel, Dubner paint boxes, or even wipes. Once a program went on the air, it was do-or-die-for-good-old-NBC. The name of the game then was "continuity." It meant that once the director in the control room said "Take one!" they were off and running. No stopping, no pausing—no ad-libbing. That was live "live" television.

Fred Coe, who later won wide acclaim, not only on television but also in the theater and motion pictures, was one of the first producer/directors in Studio 3-H. Up to the time Coe joined the NBC staff, the major production people were two veterans of the stage, Ed Sobol and Ernie Collings. Sobol was a burly, short, tough-talking middle-aged man who had seen everything seeable in the theater. He knew his actors, especially whom he could rely on under pressure, and he used them. Collings, was a suave, grey-haired, soft-spoken gentlemen who wore pince-nez slung around his neck on a ribbon, and whose approaches to plays and actors were calms in the center of rough seas. Between them, these two stalwarts programmed a good part of NBC's TV output of the mid-1940's.

Presiding over them as program manager was a cigar-chewing, rough-and-ready, huge bear of a man, named Warren Wade, who originally had come from vaudeville. Then, he went on to be a cast member of *Lum 'N Abner*, a popular radio show for years. He had been hired by John F. Royal, who was program vice president of NBC—which meant radio—but who decided to take on the television network as his private fiefdom.

Royal had the ear and confidence of the top management at both NBC and RCA, so he ruled NBC television—what

there was of it—with an iron fist. Before coming to Radio City, Royal had been manager of the NBC station in Cleveland, after a long career on the managerial side of vaudeville and the theater.

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**It was John Royal, back in the 1940's, who predicted that one day the crowd at Madison Square Garden for a championship fight would only be the backdrop for a television spectacular.**

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He was enthralled at the prospect of plunging into the new medium, although the total set population was somewhere in the neighborhood of 5,000 when he took over. His ambition was to put television into overdrive, and through top programming, force the medium onto the public consciousness. It was Royal, back in the 1940's, who predicted that one day the crowd at Madison Square Garden for a championship fight would only be the backdrop for a television spectacular. He said the same thing about the crowds at Ebbetts Field (where the Brooklyn Dodgers played)—and at other sporting events—and people laughed. How right Royal was.

To bring some order out of the chaos in Studio 3-H, Royal decided to institute weekly program meetings. At these meetings were the producer/directors; their boss, the cigar-chewing program manager; the director of special events, a likeable, young man named Burke Crotty (who later became a top producer at ABC Sports); Paul Alley the first head of NBC News, the former head of Hearst Metrotone News newsreel; and others who performed ancillary tasks.

Royal, a boulevardier who frequently sported a carnation in his lapel, was a regular first-nighter along New York's Great White Way. What he didn't know about the New York and London theater he could easily fake and often did. At one program meeting, Royal announced that he had just returned from England and had signed Emlyn Williams to a long-term contract. This was startling news indeed for a then small operation like NBC television. Royal turned to his program manager and said "I'll bet you don't even know who Emlyn Williams is." The program man gulped, took the ever-present cigar out of his mouth and blithely replied, "Of course I do. I saw her the last time she performed here."

**T**he very first live dramatic product ever done on television was a scene from the play *Susan and God*, starring Gertrude Lawrence, in 1939. At that time, NBC's station still had experimental call letters: W2XBS. In July 1, 1941, the call letters became WNBT, and the station turned commercial—only to be put in moth balls during World War II, until the conversion of Studio 3-H from a radio studio to television in January, 1944.

News began to show up on television. Alley, who had been wooed to NBC from the editorship of Hearst Metrotone News in 1944, was a one-man band. At the time, the nation's sole source of visual news was the theatrical newsreel, shown in some 25,000 movie houses across the country. Royal was determined, through Alley, to change that habit pattern—to persuade people to buy television sets to see the latest news. While Studio 3-H was busily grinding out dramatic and other live television shows, the first scheduled broadcast TV news was being produced by Alley and one film cutter.

Alley screened thousands of feet of black and white film a week, edited the stories, wrote the commentary, se-

lected the background music and voiced the narration "live" as the scenes were broadcast.

Of course, those early television newscasts had no anchormen, or women, or reporters, and the newscasts resembled the theatrical newsreels they were eventually to replace. Their length, unlike those today, ran as long as seemed necessary, depending upon the programming which preceded and followed. The main object was somehow to tell stories with pictures, and one sequence followed another without the intervening linkage of a Brokaw, a Rather or a Jennings.

At NBC, Alley who had long been the "voice" on theatrical newsreels, performed the same function on the air. His was the "voice-over" for these early years. But in 1948, the pattern

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**Once, he was surprised to hear Crotty, doing a remote boxing match from St. Nicholas Arena, ask him on the intercom: "What time do you want this fight to end?"**

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was broken, and the anchorman concept was born as NBC's John Cameron Swayze became television's news "talking head" and a personality in his own right. Newsreels were through—in the movie houses, and on television.

"Our early news shows did much to promote the sale of television sets," says Alley, now an 81-year old columnist and writer living in Orlando.

At that time there was a network consisting of three stations: WNBT, New York; WPTZ, Philadelphia; and WRGB, Schenectady. Even so, Alley would sign on the air saying: "This is the NBC Television Network." Washington wasn't in the picture then, and Chi-

cago was a few years away. And Hollywood? A dream.

**A**n NBC Policies & Practices booklet, published in 1945, had also promoted television:

*"It's here now. And it's great. At least so say present television audiences (the approximately 5,000 set owners in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut and Delaware) currently receiving television entertainment every night in the week."*

Alley worked closely with the dramatic producers and the special events people, so that he could time his news programs to fit the schedule. Once, though, he was surprised to hear Crotty, doing a remote boxing match from St. Nicholas Arena, ask him on the intercom: "What time do you want this fight to end?"

The first obituary of a president of the United States to appear on television was the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Weeks ahead, on a hunch, Alley had begun preparing for such an eventuality. Scenes of FDR's spectacular career already had been pulled from the library. Three titles hung on bins in his cutting room: "ROOSEVELT NEAR DEATH . . . ROOSEVELT ASSASSINATED . . . ROOSEVELT DEAD AT 63."

This was, of course, some time before the president's death in April, 1945. Just Alley's luck that two FBI men who happened to be around the cutting room spotted the titles and pulled Alley and his small staff in to explain.

With TV news and special events beginning to fatten up the schedule, Studio 3-H continued to be a beehive of activity for live, dramatic programming.

Every Sunday night in 1945, the station broadcast a "live talent dramatic production" which included Sidney Kingsley's Pulitzer prize-winning play

*Men In White*. It won for the station the American Television Society's Award for the outstanding television drama production. Sherwood's *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* was called by *Variety*: "Television's greatest play to date."

The following year, 1946, WNBT arranged with the Dramatists Guild for a series of *Broadway Prevues*—mostly plays which had been written for Broadway production, and could be presented to producers through the medium of television. The first play in this series was called *Mr. Mergenthwirker's Lobbies*, a hit with the audience and repeated several times later. *Blithe Spirit*, *Seven Keys to Baldpate*, and *Mr. and Mrs. North*, were also produced.

By 1947, though, the television viewing audience had increased to the point that sponsors were taking a hard look at it. For the first time a major advertiser, Kraft Foods, contracted to sponsor a weekly dramatic show. The first Kraft show went on the air on May 7, 1947. It was an original play by Elizabeth McFadden, a drama titled *Double Door*. According to Ed Herlihy, pioneer broadcaster and announcer, who did all the Kraft commercials for 25 years, *Double Door* was a 5-character replacement for a play called *The Man with the Red Hair* that the NBC censors did not like.

Each of the five actors on the drama was paid \$50. Kraft's advertising agency, J. Walter Thompson, produced the show and an actor well known in those days, named John Baragrey, was the program's star. For the next eleven years the *Kraft Television Theater* was an NBC staple, the TV training ground for a flock of stars including Jack Klugman, Eva Marie Saint, Gregory Peck, and Grace Kelly. In that first season, Kraft did adaptations of works by A. A. Milne, John van Druten, and Emily Bronte (*Wuthering Heights* which starred John Forsythe),

among many others—and such Broadway hits as *Room Service*, *Criminal at Large*, and *Her Master's Voice*.

According to Herlihy, virtually every well known actor in TV, films or on stage, performed at some time or other on the *Kraft Television Theater*. But one of Kraft's problems was the studio—3-H—from which it originated. The light and the heat were impossible. Herlihy says now that at times the temperature would rise to 105° on the floor of the studio while the show was on the air. Giant fans were brought in to cool it down—and some nights it was necessary to open the studio doors to let the hot air out.

"One of the problems we had in the days of live television," Herlihy told me recently, "was that dead bodies were always getting up." That would occur, he explained, because victims would fall differently in rehearsal than they did when they were on air—even though directors would usually tell actors to count to five before getting up.

"Another problem," said Herlihy, "was that actors would finish one scene on one side of the studio, and would then have to run around the perimeter of the studio to get to their next scene."

"You saved me once," Jack Klugman told Ed recently. "I was racing around the studio to get to another set when I slipped on a wet spot, landed on my keister and would never have made it to my next scene if you hadn't picked me up off the floor."

Underdressing was another device directors resorted to in live television. Actors who would have to change clothes but didn't have time to get to their dressing room would wear two sets of clothes. Sometimes, the camera would pan in for a closeup head shot and stay on it until the actor in the closeup changed his entire wardrobe while he was still emoting.

Grace Kelly was once caught fully clothed after she had played a scene where she appeared to be undressed

and in bed, and then had to make a quick getaway for her next shot. She didn't realize that another camera in the room had gone "live", just as she tossed the bedclothes away and dashed to her next scene.

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**When the actors took their breaks, the Kraft cooks would take over. There were four cooks on hand to do special recipes: marshmallows, salads, souffles, all made right there while the show was on the air.**

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It was primitive camera time. Herlihy remembers that at 2:00 A.M. the director would chalk-mark the studio floor on the day of air; at 8:00 A.M. the cast would arrive, rehearse all day, and a dress run-through would be held at 4:00 P.M. At that time, the commercials would be integrated into the show.

There were six 1-minute commercials for each hour's show—and each week they were different. Kraft built its own kitchen right in Studio 3-H which included three refrigerators and three stoves. The commercials would be created in Chicago, home of Kraft, and then re-created in the New York studio. On air day, when the actors took their breaks the Kraft cooks would take over.

There were four cooks and one supervisor. Each of them was a specialist on hand to do special recipes: desserts, marshmallows, salads, souffles, whatever—all made right there in the Kraft kitchens while the show was on the air.

Herlihy would work in front of a TV monitor right next to the kitchens, earphones clapped on, in front of a "live" microphone, a stop-watch in hand, and that voice that could sell anything. Frequently, he would have to ad-lib because the show would finish short

and his fill-ins—once running to 7 minutes—became renowned.

The smells emanating from the kitchens were devastatingly enticing. Not long ago, Herlihy met Gregory Peck at Chasen's restaurant in Hollywood. On seeing Herlihy, Peck said: "You almost killed us!" When Herlihy asked why, Peck explained that years ago he and Grace Kelly had been rehearsing a play on "Kraft" and did not have time to eat between dress rehearsal and air. In the middle of the show, at commercial time, tempting smells began emerging from the kitchens, overlaid by Herlihy's smooth voice talking about each element in the dish being prepared. Peck said he and Kelly were overwhelmed, famished and of course unable to eat any of it.

As the decade progressed, even more imposing productions were seen. A Tennessee Williams play called *Portrait of a Madonna* was directed by Hume Cronyn and starred Jessica Tandy. Marlon Brando appeared in a production called *I'm No Hero* and Julie Harris, Tom Ewell, Cloris Leachman, Ralph Bellamy, Melvin Douglas and Anthony Quinn, and Jose Ferrer (in Budd Schulberg's *What Makes Sammy Run?*), were appearing regularly on the small screen. The late Clare Booth Luce starred in *Becky Sharpe*, and in a production of a play called *The Queen Bee*.

Perhaps the busiest actress of that period was a beautiful ingenue named Felicia Montealegre. Ms. Montealegre was in great demand by all the dramatic shows of that era and according to L. J. Gianakos, who has compiled the most comprehensive chronicle of television drama series programming of the early era, could have become a major star in all media. Her career was cut short when she became the wife of maestro Leonard Bernstein and retired temporarily to raise a family. Unfortunately, she died before she could return to acting.

Hour after hour of programming emanated from Studio 3-H in that brief

period when it reigned supreme at NBC, including *Howdy Doody*, and *Author Meets Critics*.

But Studio 3-H will be remembered as a cradle of the medium, the place where big risks were taken and dramatic stars were created; where television took a chance on prize-winning drama translated to a new medium, as well as originals made for TV. It was the prologue for the explosive coast-to-coast era that really built television to a national outlet for entertainment and information.

It was experimental; it was fun; it was, in a sense, pioneering.

3-H was, indeed, a little studio that could . . . and did. ■

Allan H. Kalmus spent eight years at NBC-TV as the nation's first television publicist. Subsequently he became publicity director at Lever Brothers Company, and for the past three decades has run his own public relations/sports marketing agency. He has represented Bob Hope for 25 years.

## THE LONDON SCENE

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### Freudian Television

*"British TV viewer Emma Freud has a style that her famous great-grandfather might have liked to psychoanalyze. She takes her subjects to bed with her."*

*"Ms. Freud, the 26-year-old great-granddaughter of Sigmund Freud, is the host of *Pillow Talk*, a one-on-one interview show set entirely in a king-size bed at the London Weekend Television studios.*

*"It's very humourous for someone to get into bed to do an interview," Ms. Freud said. . . They just laugh incredibly, and it's amazing how relaxed they become. You can ask braver questions."*

*"The bed forces the interviewer and the interviewee much closer together," she says."*

—Sean Kelly,  
Electronic Media

In this era  
of high  
technology,  
it is especially  
important  
to remember  
that talent  
comes  
from  
people.

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# COMMUNICATIONS, COMPETITION AND QUALITY

The chief executive of one of the major media companies surveys the evolving world of television, and suggests ways of dealing with competition in that world.

**BY KATHARINE GRAHAM**

**I** remember the birth of television in my neighborhood. It coincided with the birth of my son Bill in 1948. We lived in Georgetown, a would-be egg-headed community, where the residents looked down their noses at the new invention and some said they would never allow it in their homes.

However, when Bill was born, my husband, Phil Graham, thought he would surprise me. He bought a new TV and installed it in our bedroom. The night I came home from the hospital, he invited some friends over to watch our first show. It was a baseball game. Phil and our friends enjoyed it immensely. I fell asleep as the game went into extra innings and lasted far into the night.

Broadcasting soon became a major business interest, as well as a personal one. My father has started our company when he bought *The Washington Post* at a bankruptcy sale in 1933 for \$825,000. He launched our broadcast division by acquiring a small Washington radio station, WINX, in 1944. It could be heard within the wide radius of two blocks! It made some money in the war years, until my father discovered—and ended—broadcasts of the daily “number” for the benefit of local gamblers.

In 1949 Phil, then publisher of *The Post*, had traded WINX and some change for one-half of WTOP radio,

which he later parlayed into a full interest. Phil and his CBS partners then bought WTOP-TV, one of Washington's early television stations.

These were good acquisitions, but we faced a real problem. It's hard to believe now, but *The Washington Post* newspaper then was still unprofitable. For years my father had paid its losses. Phil and I, who were purchasing control from him and had far fewer resources, needed to figure out some way to cover the paper's deficits.

Phil's answer now goes by the fancy name of diversification. He acquired WJXT in Jacksonville in 1953 to help pay *The Post's* losses. My father, incidentally, was really worried. For the first time, he doubted Phil's judgment and asked a neutral friend and lawyer to find out if Phil had flipped. The Korean War was threatening to dry up the supply of television tubes. Of more concern, Phil had to pay the highest price ever for such a station. Sound familiar? But then it was two and three-quarter million dollars. My father soon agreed with the purchase and backed him.

WJXT was one of the original 62 stations in the country—and the only station between Atlanta and Miami. Someone observed we had a station but there were hardly any television sets. For four years, we had the market to ourselves. NBC didn't come into Jacksonville until 1957—with a station owned by 12 different interests.

Thanks to the FCC and the coaxial

cable, the three networks had a lock on the country's viewing audience. All of America tuned in to Ed Sullivan on Sunday night, Lucy on Monday and Milton Berle on Tuesday.

It was extremely difficult for a local station to program outside the network—even if it wanted to. And there wasn't much incentive. You could make a lot of money by simply turning on the network switch. And for years, people did.

Then came our own Black Monday: the advent of satellites. They turned our peaceful bucolic world into a jungle. They facilitated the growth of independent stations and made other delivery systems possible. They helped turn cable from an industry that consumed six billion dollars of cash between 1979 and 1984, into an industry that will produce eight billion dollars in net available cash between 1985 and 1990.

They made our life hell.

We've seen and felt the fallout. Network audience share has plummeted. You all remember when a 25 share was considered an excuse to take a network prime time show off the air. Now I understand a 17 or 18 share is an excuse to keep it on. Interestingly, the top ten shows still have the same audience they did a decade ago. It's the bottom ten that have lost out.

With the spread of VCRs (now in 45 million homes), the three networks combined fail to deliver even half the television audience in some major markets on some weekend nights. The era of network control has given way to an era of personal choice. In short, as one of the industry's most distinguished executives and successful producers said to me, "The party's over."

And it's going to get even worse. Within the next decade or so, we'll have fiber optic networks wired to television sets nationwide. The Bell Operating Companies most certainly will be in the business of program distribution—at least they'll want to be—

and viewers may have not hundreds of program choices, but thousands.

How are we, all of us, going to compete, succeed and profit in this vastly more competitive and changing world? No one has all the answers. I hope lessons learned along the way, some from the print medium, may offer a few clues.

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**I think we have to redefine a television franchise. Clearly, having an FCC license or a network affiliation no longer guarantees the audience it once did. Television is becoming more like certain kinds of print.**

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First, I think we have to redefine a television franchise. Clearly, having an FCC license or a network affiliation no longer guarantees the audience it once did. Television is becoming more like certain kinds of print. It has to renew its franchise every day by appealing to, and satisfying specific groups of people.

Joel Chaseman, who has done such a terrific job leading Post-Newsweek Stations, put it this way. "If all we think we are is channel 2 or 46 in a given market, we won't survive. If we think of our stations as ecologically complicated small groups of people with special communications skills and resources, then we will. We won't succeed if we become simply program brokers."

In a sense, we have to be distribution neutral. We have to produce something that people will want to receive, that people will find essential, whether or not it happens to come into their home automatically, at no cost.

That brings me to a second point. My experience has shown that the information and entertainment products commanding the largest and most

faithful audiences over the long haul—in every medium—are quality products.

Let me be clear. I'm not here to criticize the quality of television. On the contrary, considering the volume of programming produced in this country, I appreciate the overall job you are doing, although I hope we all think constantly about how we can improve whatever it is we are engaged in.

I also do not believe that quality programming has to be intellectual or elitist. I don't believe television should be restricted to David Brinkley, *Masterpiece Theatre* and *Wall Street Week*—any more than I believe *The Washington Post* should carry only stories on the trade deficit, the West Bank and Super Tuesday. We also run three pages of comics, an update on the soaps and the daily horoscope.

I simply believe there can be—and there are—quality game shows, quality sitcoms, quality sports, even quality weather—just as there can be, and are, news shows that are tasteless and exploitative.

In other words, I believe in television's role as an entertainment medium. And I believe in appealing to and attracting a mass audience. Let's face it; we have to. In today's world, we're all measured and rewarded by

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**I believe the survival and success of local television stations is key to our country's survival. Democracy is nourished on information.**

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numbers. But if you can capture your audience with entertainment, then you may be able to educate and inform them with news and documentaries.

Paying lip service to quality and achieving it are two different things.

Here's what experience has taught me.

Real quality requires the very best people you can find. It means giving them freedom to exercise their talents, while having the management skill to keep them moving in the right direction. It's a very delicate, almost magical, balancing act.

In news, quality means giving reporters and editors freedom to pursue the news as they see it. It means owners standing behind their reporters and editors—and standing up for them when necessary. It means reporting legitimate news even when it makes us unpopular with public officials, and with readers and viewers as well. It means asking the tough questions, whether of Gary Hart, George Bush, Jesse Jackson, Pat Robertson or any other candidate. It also means correcting our mistakes.

In entertainment, quality demands that you have confidence in your own judgment, your own taste, your own instinct for what is truly of value. The imitative and the unoriginal are rarely top drawer.

Quality requires infinite patience, demands a willingness to take risks and compels acceptance of failure. It takes courage to take risks and be willing to fail and try again.

Quality also needs money, but money certainly doesn't guarantee quality. Our real problem is making poor things expensively.

Quality is a constant struggle. But it's worth it. I believe that real quality ultimately pays off. You have to be profitable to be able to invest in the product. In return, good product will eventually lead to profitability.

It was our investment in quality that enabled *The Washington Post* to rise from fifth place in a five newspaper town, to number one today—with the highest market penetration of any major-city newspaper.

It was investment in quality that enabled *Newsweek* to grow from a small publication for businessmen to a magazine that reaches more than 23 mil-

lion readers around the world.

It was investment in quality that enabled us to take WDIV in Detroit and WPLG in Miami from the cellar to the roof.

We also invested in quality at WJXT in Jacksonville, even when we were alone, dominant and didn't have to. We put so much into our news that we supplanted the local newspaper as the major source of community information. We took on corrupt local politicians, saw the people vote them out of office and ultimately change the form of the city's government.

And this commitment to quality paid off, too. It really helped us in the Watergate years, when the Nixon Administration tried to intimidate us by bringing about challenges to our Florida television station licenses. Thanks in large part to our quality—and our profitability—we were able to withstand these threats, expensive and difficult as they were. But let's face it. In the end we were saved by Richard Nixon's own unexpected and original production—the tapes.

Because I believe so strongly in quality, I find it disturbing that the high price of the big syndicated shows is driving some small, innovative, original producers out of the business. I don't know the answer to this problem, but I do see it as a real danger to the future of quality television. Size and deep pockets don't necessarily lead to original and innovative ideas—or to change.

As important as it is, quality alone is not enough for survival in the communications industry. I believe a final requirement for success is truly knowing, understanding, satisfying and defending your particular role in the marketplace of ideas, information and entertainment.

For some of you, this role is one of producing or syndicating programming nationwide or around the world. Indeed, Pakistan looks at *Dallas* and England watches the NFL.

But for most of us, I believe this role

and our future is *local*. I know it is for The Washington Post newspaper; much as we cover national and international issues, we are primarily a *local* paper for a mass audience.

Likewise, the four Post-Newsweek stations have become number one in their markets, regardless of network affiliation—and all three networks are represented in our group—because each station became the reference point for local news and information.

In some cases, this meant we had to wait until the audience understood and accepted a new, more sophisticated, more intensive brand of journalism, which Jim Snyder was instrumental in creating.

In all cases, it has meant that we had to know what was really on the community's mind and satisfy those specific interests—whether they were unsafe highways in Jacksonville, college sports in Miami, an alarming infant mortality rate in Hartford, or Tiger baseball in Detroit. It has meant realizing, too, that the audience and its needs are constantly changing. The minute you think you've sized them up, you begin to lose them.

**S**uccess in local news has broader impact. In fact, I think it's generally recognized by people in the business that the audience for *local* newscasts has as much influence on the ratings of the network news as do the network anchors themselves. And the lead-in to the local news is critical, too.

I remember the trouble we had with the lead-in to our local evening news show when we owned WTOP in Washington years ago. We tried everything without success, until Dinah Shore came along. She worked so well for our particular market that we kept her on until she and I both got Social Security. Even now, I'll only eat Holly Farms chicken!

I don't want to be misunderstood. We need network programming and

network news. We need to keep this constantly evolving relationship healthy. But at the same time, we need to grow our audience for local and regional programming.

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**In entertainment, quality demands that you have confidence in your own judgment, your own taste, your own instinct for what is truly of value. The imitative and the unoriginal are rarely top drawer.**

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Although local news was our passport to success in the past, it may be more competitive in the future. Others have discovered the value of strong local news teams. We don't have that playing field to ourselves anymore. Now our station people believe that local entertainment programming also may be important for leadership tomorrow.

This is a very difficult challenge, as our own failures make clear. Still it's just as clear that successful locally produced entertainment is possible and worth striving for. Donahue and Oprah began as local shows. It's a lot easier and less expensive to take a successful local show national. And if you fail with a local effort, as we did in Detroit, it's not a major disaster. It's a good try.

I believe the survival and success of local television stations is key to our country's future. Democracy is nourished on information. Our democracy, in particular, thrives on our unique mix of national, local, public and private information and entertainment delivered free into our homes. Cable is an important component of this mix as well. It, too, adds a local dimension. If any one of these elements is threatened, the whole structure is weakened.

To stay strong, healthy, vibrant and essential means that we can never stand still. We do have to keep reinventing ourselves. ■

Katharine Graham is Chairman of the Washington Post Company, which owns *The Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, and WFSB-TV, Hartford; WJXT, Jacksonville; WDIV, Detroit; and WPLG, Miami. This article is adapted from her keynote address at the 1988 convention of the National Association of Television Program Executives.

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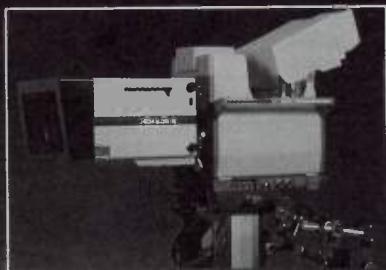


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# BLACK EYE AT BLACK ROCK

BY BRIAN ROSE

**P**ublishing in the latter half of the 1980s appears to be fascinated by two central institutions in American life—the Reagan White House and the CBS Television Network. The disruptive series of internal and external crises wracking the government run by Ronald Reagan and the empire run by William Paley have prompted many of the players—both major and minor—to share what happened with the public at large. The result has been a seemingly endless tide of books that take readers inside the twisted and treacherous halls of power. With their mandate to scrape away the proprieties, these administrators-turned-authors expose the varying ways policies were betrayed, priorities abandoned, and the counsel of loyal personnel ignored. To recoup their often large advances and generate attention, each volume included at least a dozen-or-so juicy bits designed straight for the gossip pages and *People* magazine. Thus, we are treated to bizarre tales of the First Lady's visits to astrologers or Dan Rather's "taxi kidnapping" in Chicago, of President Reagan's cheerful forgetfulness or Van Gordon Sauter's "marriage" to his star anchorman.

While it's easy to understand the sales appeal of revelations about the Reagan presidency, the often arcane economic and political turmoil at a

television network would hardly seem to be the stuff of which publishing dreams are made. Nevertheless, the CBS "book industry" (as opposed to the once mighty and now deceased CBS Publishing division) has become an established force. During the past few years, half a dozen volumes have appeared recounting the convulsions in the dominion of Paley. More are scheduled in the seasons to follow, including that latest wrinkle in the autobiography genre—the "revised" autobiography—containing information the author, in this case Paley himself, felt "reluctant" (translation: constrained by good taste) to offer the first time around in his reticent 1979 memoirs, *As It Happened*.

The general interest in CBS, as opposed to what happens at ABC or NBC, is a phenomenon worth exploring. Despite its recent lack of success in the ratings, CBS possesses an aura no other broadcast institution can match. It's an aura that, in an industry noteworthy for caring only about the immediate present, rests largely on the legacy of its past.

The carefully crafted image Paley created for his "Tiffany network," enhanced by Frank Stanton's elegant burnish, surprisingly still endures. Even with its glory days behind it, the mystique of CBS remains powerful, particularly in the minds of TV critics and the hearts of hundreds of current and former employees. Whether the public is aware of the once luminous

nature of this corporate culture is difficult to say. Unquestionably, the one feature that stands out about CBS for the majority of viewers is the feature that has been the network's chief source of pride and prestige for decades—CBS News.\*

The mythology that grew out of the indisputable achievements of this most visible emblem of CBS is remarkably potent. From its beginnings in the 1930s, the news division came to be seen as a protected and secure journalistic haven in American broadcasting. Led by Edward R. Murrow, working at CBS News quickly emerged as an almost spiritual calling. Murrow's courtly roundtable, with its loyal knights Eric Sevareid, Charles Collingwood, and Howard K. Smith, was the closest electronic news reporting would come to its own version of Camelot. As they transferred their talents to television, the valiant warriors of CBS News continued to confront the serious issues of the day, producing a range of documentaries and news reports that awoke the conscience of the nation.

For quite a while, their territory was protected against the vandal hordes of advertisers and ratings-driven programmers. Then, came the great betrayal. The Emperor/Chairman, who previously had stood by his small state within a state, gradually found its inflexible integrity an irritant. Paley's steadfast support for Murrow wavered and finally collapsed. Murrow left, as did his close ally Fred Friendly a few years later, and CBS News felt its first great tremors.

Nevertheless, the division endured

\*It's interesting to note that even though news constitutes a very small part of any network's programming, it is usually the most written about aspect of broadcasting. Far more non-fiction books have appeared on electronic journalism, and its problems, than on popular prime time and daytime fare. Entertainment programming has, however, been extensively written about in fiction (see Mary Ann Watson's article in *Television Quarterly* for a full listing).

and prospered, returning to its status as Paley's favorite duchy during Walter Cronkite's formidable reign.\*

The 1960s and '70s were times of solidification and triumph, as CBS News wore its crown of leadership and ratings superiority with justifiable pride. Then, the perils of succession began

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**During the 1980's, the disorder at CBS and CBS News was transformed into a national saga, narrated in extraordinary detail in influential dailies and in journals as varied as *Newsweek*, *Esquire*, *People* and *Playboy*. It was also covered on the network news of its competitors.**

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to manifest themselves. Cronkite's announcement in 1979 that he planned to step down as the network's anchor-man proved to be a climactic turning point in the history of CBS News from which this special realm would never recover.

The mythic qualities that went into the story of the forty-year rise of CBS News would operate even more powerfully during the decade of its decline. Like all kingdoms, the fall in the early 1980s of CBS and its most treasured asset, CBS News, was played out against a landscape of internecine conflict, personal betrayals, and sneak attacks. This epic drama was popu-

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\*Though respectful of the Murrow tradition, Cronkite was viewed as somewhat of an outsider by the knights of the roundtable, as Gary Paul Gates notes in *Air Time*. Thus even though he inherited the anchor crown, there was a sense of friction between old and new, especially since his leadership lacked the sense of elegance and spirit of "enlightenment" that was at the basis of the Murrow approach.

lated by a dynamic collection of characters.

There were feuding princes (Dan Rather and Roger Mudd); a false prophet who doubled as a dark sorcerer (Van Gordon Sauter); a cowboy knight (Don Hewitt); an exiled, wounded king (Walter Cronkite); a Hamlet (Bill Moyers); a beautiful and cunning princess (Diane Sawyer); a combination Richard II/Richard III anchorman (again, Dan Rather); a thwarted invader from the South (Ted Turner); and a new emperor who, disguised as a white knight, took over the dominion primarily to dismantle it (Larry Tisch).

It was only natural that the press would be attracted to these fateful cracks in the monarchy. During the 1980s, the disorder at CBS and CBS News was transformed into a national saga, narrated in extraordinary detail in influential dailies and in journals as varied as *Newsweek*, *Esquire*, *People*, and *Playboy*. It was also covered on the network news of its competitors. Even though ABC and NBC were undergoing similar revolutions in ownership and management style, their stories received comparatively scant attention. After all, neither network could match CBS as a corporate entity in terms of luster or dramatic personality.

The takeovers by Capital Cities and General Electric, while just as important a shift in American broadcasting control, were generally portrayed as the replacement of one competent bureaucracy with another, composed this time of somewhat sterner stuff. The changes at CBS, however, were seen as cataclysmic and epochal. The vast mythic image surrounding CBS News convinced reporters and the public alike that the very future of electronic journalism was at stake in the battles being waged on West 57th Street.

With coverage of events at CBS receiving wide play in the media, books promising the inside story became hot commodities. There had been many

works about CBS News in the past, chronicling the division's various deviations from the ideal that it alone, among all other broadcasting organizations, seemed duty bound to uphold.\* But the crop of recently published books on CBS are somewhat different in tone and method. The popularity of entertainment industry exposés (such as *Indecent Exposure* and *Final Cut*) along with the cheekier, cynical type of gossip now popular in newspapers, magazines, and "info-tainment" shows, has led these authors to adopt a more direct, personality-oriented approach, adding far greater doses of insider "dirt" and sensationalism than their predecessors.

The least guilty of this, and possibly the mildest in tone as a result, is former CBS News President Bill Leonard's 1987 memoirs, *The Storm of the Eye: A Lifetime at CBS*. Leonard proves himself to be a genial, even-handed guide to his years at CBS, which ended once Dan Rather took over Cronkite's throne. The news division's achievements, and the role he played in them, are recalled fondly, with few traces of bitterness or regret. Leonard's part in the "years of turmoil" (and undoubtedly the reason why this book found a publisher) was to be the unlucky president of CBS News at the time Walter Cronkite decided to retire.

We learn, in the work's liveliest chapter, how a successor was finally chosen, what it was like to break the disappointing news to Roger Mudd, how Rather's shrewd agent Richard

\*Among the more noteworthy are Robert Metz's *CBS: Reflections in a Bloodshot Eye* (1975), which was one of the first books to take a tough look at the usually secretive Paley empire; Gary Paul Gates's *Air Time* (1978), a lively history of CBS News, concentrating more on personalities than journalistic issues; David Halberstam's *The Powers That Be* (1979), whose controversial portrait of Paley proved so upsetting to the CBS Chairman that he had an aide tape record Halberstam's public speeches about the book; and E. Ann Sperber's *Murrow: His Life and Times* (1986), an extraordinarily thorough examination of Murrow's dramatic career at CBS.

Leibner negotiated a new contract worthy of a big-name movie star, and what went on at the tense meeting to sell the decision to then CBS President John Backe and Chairman Paley. About the trouble that followed in the years after his rather abrupt retirement, he has little to say, other than to mildly blame top management (at both the network and the news division) for the loss of morale and sense of duty characteristic of the CBS he once served.

Bill Leonard's reticence is not shared by any of the other authors examining the recent history of CBS. Peter McCabe's *Bad News at Black Rock* (also published in 1987) takes a scabrous look at the inner workings of the *CBS Morning News*, where McCabe toiled as a producer from 1985-86. A former magazine journalist, he offers a sharp-eyed portrait of a program that suffered extensive damage throughout the division's various fiscal and managerial crises. McCabe's tenure occurred in a period marked by bitter feuding among everyone in a position of authority, emotional trauma (both on- and off-the-air), malicious treatment in the press, and an imminent sense of apocalypse. As other accounts confirm, this was a fairly typical experience of what it was like to work at CBS News in the mid-1980s.

Though his sojourn was brief, McCabe managed to live through an extraordinarily wild ride on the CBS rollercoaster. The *Morning News* went through three executive producers (a fourth was hired but never had a chance to get started), more than half-a-dozen anchor personalities, and two news presidents before the show was finally snuffed out and the time slot ceded to the entertainment division. *Bad News at Black Rock* makes a modest effort to put these chaotic events in perspective. There is some discussion of the larger administrative endeavors of Van Gordon Sauter and Ed Joyce and of the small-minded activities of Dan Rather. But it's clear that McCabe's real concern is to offer read-

ers an enjoyably vindictive diary of the bizarre personalities and experiences he endured during the last gasps of the *CBS Morning News*.

Limited by its single-year, single-program focus, *Bad News at Black Rock* fails to provide a detailed exploration of how and why the various CBS crises of the 1980s took place. That task is jointly accomplished by Peter Boyer's *Who Killed CBS?* and Ed Joyce's *Prime Times, Bad Times*. Appearing almost simultaneously in early 1988, these two books tackle the recent story of CBS from different angles—Boyer as reporter on television for the *New York Times*, Joyce as a former CBS News president—but reach surprisingly similar conclusions.

While the news division has always had a problematic relationship with its parent corporation, both authors trace the source of many of the current troubles to upper management's decision removing CBS News from its customary "most favored nation" status. At the very time that the once impoverished ABC News was becoming a formidable competitor, CBS News found itself in the uncomfortable position of being unable to cover events as thoroughly as the other two networks. Cutbacks in resources and personnel, designed partially to impress Wall Street of the new fiscal prudence of Chairman Thomas Wyman's rule, ultimately robbed the news division of one of its most valuable and intangible assets—its belief in itself, in the myth of the sanctity of CBS News.

However, the news division's decline was due as much to actions from within as it was to forces from without. As Boyer and Joyce emphasize, certain key personalities played just as crucial a role in leading CBS News into chaos as any internal or external policy decisions. Though their breakdown of characters into good guys and bad guys often differs (Joyce is a struggling hero in his own book but a shifty,

ruthless bureaucrat in Boyer), both authors share a common Darth Vader: the raffish, impishly unprincipled Van Gordon Sauter, the news division's former two-time president and the answer to the question "Who Killed CBS News?"

Sauter's career is treated by Boyer and Joyce as a parable of the corruption of modern journalism. From his earliest incarnation as a junior Hemingway for the *Detroit Free Press*, Sauter exhibited a flair for self-promotion and agreeable eccentricity that would fuel his climb up the traditionally staid CBS ladder. His iconoclastic management approach, based on a disarming candor with both employees and the press, worked wonders at the CBS O&O's WBBM-TV and KNXT-TV. After

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**Dan Rather flourished in this hothouse atmosphere, especially once Sauter removed many of the lieutenants from the Cronkite regime and transformed the Evening News into a program that not only looked different but *felt* different.**

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stints as head of Standards and Practices, and Sports (certainly unusual positions for a one-time journalist), Sauter moved to the CBS News Presidency at a time when his brand of turnaround magic was sorely needed. The ratings of *The Evening News* were down, Dan Rather was becoming more tense on-the-air, and no one from the still-in-charge old guard seemed to know what to do.

Sauter's remedy was to devote all of his energy and most of the division's resources to bolster the beleaguered anchorman. As related in close detail by both Boyer and Joyce, his decision to, in Sauter's memorable word,

"marry" Rather led to a disastrous shift in priorities. The full attention of CBS News was now focused on the needs of one program and, increasingly, of one personality.

**D**an Rather flourished in this hothouse atmosphere, especially once Sauter removed many of the lieutenants from the Cronkite regime (the "yesterday" people as he and his then deputy Ed Joyce contemptuously referred to them) and transformed the *Evening News* into a program that not only looked different but *felt* different. Boyer in *Who Killed CBS?* is particularly good at analyzing the ways Sauter's strong interest in cosmetic appearance, promotion, graphics, and emotionally direct journalism helped convert the reborn network news into something that often resembled a glorified version of a local newscast.

Van Gordon Sauter succeeded brilliantly, winning over his anchorman (who desperately needed assurances and security), the public (who began to find the new Rather more appealing), and the TV press (who were beguiled by the offbeat frankness of this most unusual CBS division head). But there was a price to be paid for this finely calibrated performance. During the Sauter regime, the documentary division was almost destroyed (Sauter found the format boring), the *Morning News* was virtually eviscerated, and the division became a battleground of feuding interests and philosophies.

Sauter's eager ascent into the ranks of higher corporate management, a move no previous CBS News President would have ever dreamed of or wanted, underlined the changes that had taken place in the land of Murrow, Friendly, and Cronkite. No longer was the presidency of the country's most distinguished TV news organization a final career destination. Instead, it had become just a stepping stone up the CBS executive ladder, an administrative way station until another opportunity

came along.

Ultimately, Sauter would return to CBS News, disillusioned by life at Black Rock. But, there were no cheering crowds to greet him, save the small brass band led by Dan Rather. The turmoil in the news division was now at a fever pitch, thanks in part to the rocky reign of Ed Joyce. Sauter himself would last only a short time before he too was forced out into the cold, once Larry Tisch engineered his way into power.

*Who Killed CBS?* and *Prime Times, Bad Times* draw somewhat different lessons from the rise and fall of Van Gordon Sauter. To Boyer, Sauter is the emblem of all that went wrong with CBS News in the 1980s. During his tenure, the *Evening News* became a video tabloid, the "yesterday" people were shunted aside, hundreds of loyal employees were eliminated in cruelly handled fiscal cutbacks, and the news division became an engine for the production of cheap, "pop" prime time programming. Ed Joyce is, understandably, a little less severe, viewing his former friend as part devil, but also part victim of forces beyond his control (such as a downturn in the economy, devious upper corporate management, and powerful rebel forces in the division).

Joyce saves his chief wrath for Dan Rather, the mercurial anchorman of the *CBS Evening News*. The most sensational sections of *Prime Times, Bad Times* depict countless examples of Rather's hypocrisy, deviousness, and erratic on- and off-the-air behavior. (Boyer, it should be noted, provides several pages of colorful Rather tidbits as well.) Joyce certainly had reason to be upset with the news division's star personality—after all, it was Rather, more than any other person, who made his tenure in office miserable. But there is something about the sheer volume of anti-Rather material Joyce includes, and the gleeful manner in which it is told that makes this book often seem less like a reflective memoir and more like a whiny saga

of revenge.

Nevertheless, Joyce's harsh portrait of a uneasy, desperate-for-control anchorman is confirmed by Boyer, who sees Rather's increased newsroom power as a primary source of divisiveness. *Who Killed CBS?* chronicles how the *Evening News* became a brutal caste system, with only favored "A-list" correspondents allowed to appear. Encouraged by Sauter, Rather was given unprecedented authority over personnel. Those found wanting were exiled to newly created Siberias, such as the once radiant *Sunday Morning* (now sadly stripped of staff and resources), or the decimated ranks of the *Morning News*. One of the most shoddily treated during the Rather/Sauter regime was that august monument to "yesterday," Walter Cronkite, forced to lead an Elba-like existence at a time when there was little call for his talent. (Joyce provides a depressing example of this in his description of the way Cronkite was relegated to the sidelines throughout the election night coverage of 1982.)

These destructive ego clashes, when combined with continual fiscal disorder, harsh battles for control, and other assorted threats to the empire characterize the sad story of CBS News in the 1980s. Both Ed Joyce's *Prime Times, Bad Times* and Peter Boyer's *Who Killed CBS?* offer compelling versions of this decline and fall. While Boyer's account is far more analytical and dispassionate, together his book and Joyce's make interesting companions.

*Prime Times, Bad Times* is probably the best place to start because of its intimate views of the news division's troubled atmosphere. But it needs to be stated that Joyce can be an infuriating guide. His remarkable memory, which permits him to recall every detail of every conversation he had during the last twenty years (including what jokes he told and what appro-

priate authors he chose to quote), seems dedicated to serving only the cause of self-interest. Rarely is anyone cited who doesn't have something good to say about Ed Joyce. Those with less favorable remarks are inevitably revealed to be scoundrels, fools, or psychotics.

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**Some new approaches to news productions (as routinely practiced by the zippier ABC News and on many local newscasts) could be successfully integrated into the CBS tradition without undue harm.**

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But despite these repeated testimonials to his virtues, Joyce does provide a valuable perspective on what was actually happening inside CBS News in the Sauter era. We learn what it was like as he and Sauter tried to revitalize the Rather broadcast; how he was left with the disagreeable task of instituting tighter fiscal controls; what went on during the Westmoreland trial; what strange measures were necessary to keep on-air personalities happy; and how he found himself at fateful odds with not only his anchorman, but also with Sauter (his boss/friend), a newly revitalized corps of old-timers, and the entire staff of the morning and evening news broadcasts.

Written as a defense of his unpopular tenure in the news division, *Prime Times, Bad Times* does make a case for the lonely, martyr-like positions its author staunchly upheld. CBS News was an apparently bloated operation that did need to cut back on expenses and personnel. Talent costs were excessive, and avaricious talent agents were partially to blame. Some new approaches to news production (as routinely practiced by the zippier ABC News and on many local newscasts)

could be successfully integrated into the CBS tradition without undue harm.

Boyer agrees with most of this, but he also gives far more weight to how poorly these policies were implemented. From the start, Sauter and his deputy approached CBS News with a feisty "us vs. them" philosophy that was bound to rattle the large number of "them" in their domain. While Joyce felt a certain allegiance to the "yesterdays" who still worked at and believed in CBS, the past held little sway for Sauter who felt almost exhilarated in breaking the respectful codes that governed the division's sense of self. Venerable staff members were clumsily discarded. Venerable domains, such as the distinguished documentary unit, were left to rot. As Boyer observes, Sauter could at least mask the tone of his actions by his affability and bonhomie. Joyce's icy personality (he was dubbed "the Velvet Shiv" early in his career) and his impersonal manner ultimately managed to alienate most of CBS's key players.

**A**fter reading Joyce's largely self-righteous chronicle of his betrayal at the hands of the CBS elite, it's fascinating to compare coverage of the same events as reported in Boyer. With no grand scores to settle (though let the record note that Boyer did have a short and unhappy experience as the media critic on *The Morning News*), *Who Killed CBS?* offers a less noble portrait of Joyce and his activities.

Usually, this is accomplished by simply supplying a bit more detail. For example, in *Prime Times, Bad Times*, the author carefully records how he was congratulated by CBS news executive Ed Fouhy for his "courtly" handling of Charles Kuralt, after the difficult task of telling the beloved correspondent he was being replaced as anchor on the CBS *Morning News*. But in *Who Killed CBS?*, we're treated to the same Ed Fouhy describing how brutally the Kuralt meeting was con-

ducted and how bitterly he resented having to be present whenever Joyce announced bad news.

On larger matters, however, Boyer's access to Joyce's numerous adversaries furnishes an important perspective on the disruptive personality problems rocking CBS News. This is particularly true when the issue concerns Dan Rather, Joyce's chief nemesis during his tenure as News president. Take, for instance, the way the two books look at the controversy surrounding Joyce's widely quoted attack on Rather's aggressive agent, Richard Leibner, whom he labeled "a flesh peddler."

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**What are we to make of these varying versions of reality? There is little reason to doubt the veracity of either account. What's intriguing about these two stories is the ways they reveal the characteristic approaches of their authors.**

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In his memoirs, Joyce openly acknowledges his mistake and the damage it provoked, but he appears unaware of just how gravely wounded he was as a result of his thoughtless remark. After a strained meeting with Leibner to apologize, Joyce feels he has weathered the storm and once again includes supportive statements from others endorsing his conduct and actions. No such affirmations appear in *Who Killed CBS?*, where Dan Rather and a justifiably enraged Leibner both view the incident as a turning point that marked the News president's inevitable demise.

Even stronger discrepancies emerge in the way Boyer and Joyce discuss the tense, in-house crisis over the staffing of the CBS *Evening News*. The drama began on June 11, 1985 after Rather

made another of his repeated complaints concerning the lack of good reporters assigned to his broadcast. Joyce, feeling pushed to the limit, went back to his office to write a long memo, detailing how the *Evening News* drew upon a disproportionate share of resources when compared with other programs in the division.

The response to his clinical missive was nothing less than volcanic. Rather and his staff felt like they had been publicly slapped in the face, and after discussing the matter with his troops, the anchorman rushed into Joyce's office. According to Ed Joyce, they had a pleasant enough meeting, which began with Rather's typically insincere proclamation, "Ed, I wouldn't want the sun to set on anything that could even be perceived as a quarrel between us," and ended with Rather's assurance that, "You and I know we don't have a problem, Ed, but I'll have to calm my producers down." The anchorman left and, as Joyce reports, did nothing of the sort, despite their efforts to talk cordially after that night's broadcast.

The encounter went quite differently according to Boyer. Rather was furious as he rushed in to see Joyce, declaring "This won't do. I really don't like this. We don't need this."

Storming out of the office, he hoped that Joyce would at least make "a conciliatory visit" to the staff. When no apology was forthcoming, tensions escalated precipitously, culminating in an embarrassing report on the feud in *Variety* and a rising sense among the Rather crew Boyer writes, "that Ed had signed his death warrant."

What are we to make of these varying versions of reality? There is little reason to doubt the veracity of either account. Instead, what's intriguing about these two stories is the ways they reveal the characteristic approaches of their authors. Joyce adopts his standard high road/low road method. Professing to be unconcerned about his own personal standing in

the division permits him to seem far above the petty fray (he barely mentions, for example, the explosive article in *Variety*, noting that "by then . . . I was concentrating on a more important story, the hijacking of TWA Flight 847").

It also allows him to pursue his central passion, which is to point out the absurd posturings and never ending duplicities of Rather and the many other scheming villains he was forced to deal with at CBS. Boyer's version, meanwhile, relies on extensive interviews and source material to construct a broader historical portrait of the chaos enveloping CBS News. Given their different goals, it thus makes perfect sense that in telling the story of the post-memo uproar, Ed Joyce, with his gift for "total" recall, would only remember Dan Rather's hypocrisy, while Peter Boyer, guided by the question in his book's title, would be far more interested in Dan Rather's feelings of outrage and what happened as a result.

**B**oth *Prime Times, Bad Times* and *Who Killed CBS?* end their saga of CBS and its troubled news division with the most recent information that their publication deadlines would permit. Not surprisingly, their narratives conclude with late-breaking bulletins about Dan Rather, whose unpredictable behavior on- and off-camera captured headlines (and the cover of *TIME* magazine) during the past year.

Since the Rather/Bush confrontation last February (which just makes it into Boyer's book), there have been no more incidents involving the volatile anchorman. (In fact, the widely publicized on-air reconciliation between Rather and Walter Cronkite marking the latter's return to political commentary duties during the summer conventions of 1988 seems a way to refute some of the ugly charges about the anchorman feuds related in both Boyer and Joyce.) But CBS News as an insti-

tution continues to make news. Division head Howard Stringer was able to realize Van Gordon Sauter's fondest dreams by soaring out of the morass of news altogether directly into the corporate heaven of the presidency of the CBS Broadcast group. His highly regarded replacement, David Burke of ABC, became the first person to come from another network to take over CBS News operations from the top.

The changing character of the CBS News presidency offers dynamic proof of Boyer's main thesis. The destructive effects of the Sauter legacy have altered the very mission and soul of the division, which now finds itself headed by an outsider unschooled in the once vital components of the CBS myth. This previously inconceivable turn of events—a news president who enthusiastically abandoned higher journalistic ideals in favor of the unseemly lure of entertainment programming, only to be followed by an executive drawn from a competitive, but less prestigious, corporate culture—reveals a CBS News that seems to have severed its valuable ties to its past.

It is the glories of this past, both real or imagined, and the sadness of its passing that unites most books written about CBS, particularly this recent crop. In describing the turmoil at the news division during the 1980s, Bill Leonard, Peter McCabe, Ed Joyce, and Peter Boyer share similar feelings of outrage and betrayal. How could this bastion of high principles have fallen so low? When did position and power become more important than integrity and commitment? What forces transformed a proud, virtuous calling into a selfish pursuit of riches?

Their complaints, in many ways, aren't that different from those raised in the numerous memoir/exposes about the Reagan White House flooding the market. Whether the author is David Stockman or Peter McCabe, Donald Regan or Ed Joyce, these books all paint a common portrait of formerly great institutions now in a critical state of

depression and disorder, their deterioration blamed on weak leadership, vicious jockeying among subordinates for prominence, and a flagging of spirit and purpose.

Like the disarray affecting the Reagan administration in its final years, the decline and fall of CBS News is a story about what happens when traditions meet harsh new realities. Of course, the outcome of this particular battle was never in doubt—the demanding priorities of modern corporate America rarely allow room for such intangibles as the "Murrow legacy" or even the "yesterday" people.

What makes the drama of CBS News in the 1980s so sadly fascinating is how quickly the division's proud heritage, which stretched back more than four decades, could be devalued and dismantled. In the short space of seven years, the forces that made this privileged realm special lost their hold. Deprived of its sustaining myths, as each of these current insider accounts concludes, the once clear and illuminating eye of CBS News is left significantly blackened.

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**In depicting the charged atmosphere at CBS News during the 1980's, the recent CBS books often resort to revelations that may strike some readers as too gossipy. Character flaws and personality feuds are prominently featured, as are temper tantrums and unruly displays of ego.**

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The value of the recent CBS books is the vividness with which these troubling issues have been portrayed. *Prime Times*, *Bad Times* and *Who Killed CBS?*, in particular, provide an excellent perspective not only on what hap-

pened at CBS News since 1980, but how these events shape the status of the division today. Unlike previous historical chronicles of the network, the contemporary immediacy of these books offers an interesting way to examine the network's current operations.

The widely publicized on-air reconciliation of Walter Cronkite and Dan Rather during the summer political conventions of 1988 becomes much more intriguing to contemplate when looked at with regard to the numerous reports of the anchorman feuds. So too does News president David Burke's decision to forcefully control all information to the press, especially in light of the fact that the division's previous top executives fought most of their battles through carefully planned leaks to the eager reporters of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.

However, in depicting the charged atmosphere at CBS News during the 1980s, the recent CBS books often resort to revelations that may strike some readers as too gossipy. Character flaws and personality feuds are prominently featured, as are temper tantrums and unruly displays of ego. Clearly there is a voracious appetite for this type of semi-respectable inside chatter, fueled by publishers and the public alike. But does the inclusion of this material add anything to our understanding of CBS?

I would argue yes, for the most part. Organizations like CBS may give the impression of being formidable monoliths (so did the Reagan White House), yet their very survival is intimately tied up with the emotional temperaments and particular predilections of executives and staff employees. Policy at CBS, and other institutions, was often a matter of personality. Learning minute details of Dan Rather's anchor insecurities may seem a bit like prying, but it also helps explain why Van Gordon Sauter was able to triumph and how the structure of CBS News changed dramatically as a result. Even a comparatively minor item, such as Bill

Moyer's chronic, and, as Ed Joyce suggests, somewhat calculated, ambivalence over his CBS role serves to underscore the ways individual demeanor could affect the division's endeavors and spirit.

**W**hile the new openness in revealing behavioral idiosyncrasies may sometimes go a bit too far (do we really need to know how a nervous Dan Rather reacted when he encountered Tom Brokaw at a Connecticut party?), the complex task of interpreting modern corporate activities can only be enhanced by revealing as much information as possible.

There are, of course, still voices left to be heard concerning what happened at CBS. The most conspicuous in its silence has been that of Van Gordon Sauter, who appears to have little interest in rehashing the past or settling old scores. Instead, Sauter has moved on quite naturally to Hollywood, where he is producing the syndicated "reality-based" series *Group One Medical*. Another principal player, Dan Rather, has already written one autobiography (*The Camera Never Blinks*), covering his career up to 1977. Though widely interviewed in the years since, he has never discussed at length his perspective on the crisis at CBS News. Given his key role in the drama, and his general vilification at the hands of Ed Joyce and Peter Boyer, a follow up autobiography would appear inevitable.

Dick Salant, a respected and successful CBS News Chief for many years—twice president of the division, with 1964–1979 his second term—is reportedly writing his book. A Salant book could add significantly to the history of broadcast journalism generally and CBS News in particular, although a book by an executive who was neither colorful nor controversial might not wind up on the Cult of Personality bookshelf.

Paley's revised recollections are due

sometime in the near future, but other CBS corporate views would also be useful, particularly those of former Broadcast Group head Gene Jankowsky, who originally selected the Sauter/Joyce team to head CBS News and later, after surviving the debacle of their tenure, begged Joyce not to publish his memoirs.

While more accounts will certainly appear discussing the years of turmoil at CBS, these recent books offer an unusually rich and provocative look at contemporary broadcast history. The fact that no other network has been the subject of such sustained and intense scrutiny only emphasizes the continuing power CBS News still exerts as a mythological and journalistic force. ■

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# BOB DYLAN, WESTINGHOUSE AND "THE MEANING OF COMMUNISM"

A director's flashback to one of the great folk singer's first television broadcasts, and a curious postscript in which Dylan shows up at a party for an educational TV series for high school kids.

BY JACK KUNYE

**I**n the Spring of 1963, I was hired by the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company to direct two folk song specials for play on their stations, programs hopefully designed for further distribution in syndication. Bob Dylan starred in the second of those two programs.

Dylan had come to Greenwich Village only two years before, in 1961, a drop-out from the University of Minnesota. His career was slow to start; his peculiar talents difficult to identify. He didn't sing very well, nor play the guitar with any extra-ordinary skill. But he persisted, working from club to club for a few handouts, carrying a beat-up Gibson guitar, a Hohner harmonica slung around his neck, singing his curious songs of protest and despair. Musically, he had something to say, but his fame grew slowly, he became more of a cult figure than a popular one.

They were tumultuous times, the 60's, but even in those early years of the decade he seemed to strike the right chords for the revolution. There were more than a prescient few who recognized Dylan's talent, though never for a moment did they ever conceive, even in their wildest imagination, that he would become the symbol of his generation that he did.

John Hammond, Jr., whose recent death was mourned by the entire mu-

sic world, was among the first to invest in Dylan's potential, signing him to a five-year recording contract with Columbia Records after seeing him perform in a hootenanny at Gerde's Folk City in the Village. Dylan was 20 at the time.

The Westinghouse group of stations was facing some serious problems in those early 60's. Although very successful, (all five of their television stations, crossing three network lines, were number one in their market), the group was still under great pressure from Westinghouse Electric Company, its parent corporation, to boost profits. Under the leadership of the late Donald McGannon and a particularly creative group of associates, they were taking forays into areas of programming that local TV stations, with or without a network affiliation, had never approached before.

Motion picture packages, for example, long a staple of almost every commercial station in the country, were slowly being priced out of the range of the average station, and the Westinghouse people were the first to recognize the need for replacement programming and do something about it. By the time of my association, they already had Steve Allen on the air nightly, and were just about to make a commitment in the daytime to a young band singer from Chicago named Mike Douglas.

Rating success was slow in coming for these and the other programs which

followed, but when it came, it came like a tornado. Westinghouse Broadcasting had more than nine million dollars invested in syndicated programming before they showed any profit from the programs—big money in those years. The folk song specials that I was about to direct were an early part of that larger investment.

Musically, there were also great changes going on in the 60's. The rock revolution of the 50's started by Bill Haley and the Comets, Little Richard, Elvis Presley, and many more, had its initial impact tainted by the discovery of payola among the radio disc jockeys, some of whom had been seduced by a corrupt record industry to hype placement on their charts of newly released records. So, by the early 60's, it appeared as if the first thrust of rock and roll had petered out, and in its place there emerged a "folk" boom. The dissonance of rock segued into the softer sounds of country music—hillbilly music, folk ballads, the blues, the work songs of the depression.

Its artists were very available. I had come from CBS television in the late 50's as a Producer/Director of a Sunday morning religious program called *Look Up and Live*, where many of these people became an important source of talent for us: Theo Bikel, Leon Bibb, Tommy Makin and the Clancy Brothers, Pete Seeger, Brownie McGee and Sonny Terry, Mahalia Jackson, among others, all worked on the Sabbath.

Westinghouse Broadcasting picked up on this resurgent trend in the Fall of 1962, deciding to do two programs which would chronicle this switch in public tastes. Very bravely, a genial producer named Mike Santangelo hired John Henry Faulk, the former CBS radio personality, whose grim experience as a blacklisted performer during the McCarthy era are chronicled in his fine book *Fear on Trial*. Faulk, a folk historian who carried his Texas roots with a great deal of pride, wrote the script and acted as the narrator for the two shows—the second of which

starred The Brothers Four, Carolyn Hester, Barbara Dana, The Staples Singers, and a young folk-blues-rock singer, Bob Dylan. I was hired as the Director.

**S**o much has been written about Bob Dylan in the past twenty-five years, that I enter into my personal perceptions of the man with some trepidation. He was about twenty-two when we met, born in 1941 as Robert Allen Zimmerman. He changed his own name to Dillon (sic) when he first started appearing in small clubs in and around his home town of Hibbing, Minnesota, where his father ran a hardware store. There are conflicting stories on this name change: the more romantic being that he named himself after the Welsh poet, Dylan Thomas; lesser tales have him following in the large footsteps of Matt Dillon, the sheriff of Dodge City on *Gunsmoke*, the long running CBS television series. Jonathan Cott in his book, *Dylan*, has a wonderful description of him at this time as "part Huck Finn, part Charlie Chaplin, and part Woody Guthrie."

We met for the first time, to discuss his appearance on the Westinghouse show, in the office of Albert Grossman, a large bear of a man who had just become Dylan's manager. Present at the meeting were Santangelo, the Producer, Grossman, Grossman's partner John Court, myself, and Dylan.

My initial reaction was a striking one. For those of you too young to recall—remember this was an era when everyone, including me, still got a haircut every two weeks and wore dark suits and white shirts with conservative ties to the office—Dylan was something else again. He was wearing an undersized khaki battle jacket and a pair of soiled pencil jeans.

He had on an undescribable shirt with its unbuttoned cuffs hanging out from the sleeves of his jacket. On his feet were a pair of beat-up, short black

boots; a black Dutch Boy cap covered his unruly, uncut dark hair. He kept that cap on throughout the whole meeting. He looked to me like someone from another era, a young immigrant fresh off the boat from Russia or Poland. He also had a pair of tinted "granny" glasses leaning on the bridge of his nose that I wasn't sure he looked through as the meeting progressed.

During the conference, Dylan said little, and when talked he was given to short bursts of conversation. Santangelo and Grossman did most of the talking. When Dylan did open his mouth, I got the feeling that he was someone who enjoyed being nice to people. The main thing that bothered me, which I didn't articulate at the meeting, was that he looked so grungy. I couldn't imagine any circumstances by which he would be acceptable to the conservative executives of Westinghouse, or the crew-cutted audiences of the early 60's. I was wrong.

The meeting continued. Grossman/Court were obviously looking forward to Dylan's appearance on our program, and the terms of the agreement were easily concluded. I assumed that they perceived our program as some kind of television breakthrough for them, to give Dylan some much needed national exposure. In fact, the programs would have relatively limited sale in syndication after playing the Westinghouse group of five stations—fifty other markets at the most. But it was still a considerable audience, larger than any they had seen up to that time.

Dylan's first album for Columbia really hadn't sold that well, about five thousand copies, and although he was known in the clubs of Greenwich Village, and among a few folk-rock cognoscenti, national recognition had still evaded him. He had one rather limited TV experience on Canadian television earlier that year, but the Newport Folk Festival and Woodstock

were still to come, and even his abortive booking on *The Ed Sullivan Show* still hadn't occurred. (Grossman was to book Dylan on the Sullivan show on May 12, 1963, where he was scheduled to sing the "Talkin' John Birch Society Blues." When the CBS continuity people object to the lyrics of the song, Dylan would not substitute another and walked off the show.)

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**"How the hell are you going to put him on the air?" he asked. I remember reassuring him, not quite sure how this was going to be accomplished, because I vividly recalled my own anxiety about how Dylan looked in his crazy admixture of clothing.**

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The terms of Dylan's appearance on our program were quickly decided upon, and when studio day came, he showed up, dressed much as he had been in that first meeting in Grossman's office. I can recall the actions of my agent, Harold Cohen, who had dropped in at rehearsal, curious to see this singer he had heard so much about. After taking a look, Cohen called me aside to express his anxiety about the strange creature he had seen strumming a beat-up guitar, the metal neck brace for his harmonica slung around his neck.

**"How the hell are you going to put him on the air?" he asked.**

I remember reassuring him, not quite sure how this was going to be accomplished, because I vividly recall my own anxiety about how Dylan looked in his crazy admixture of clothing.

Normally, in shooting an act "in one", I wouldn't do a lot of cutting between cameras. A long slow zoom in for sixteen bars; a long slow zoom out for

another sixteen, and that was usually enough to cover it. But Dylan was something else again—for one thing he was just tense enough in that early appearance to look as though his eyes were popping out of his head. And that

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**The song that he had chosen to sing was a new one that he had written for his upcoming second album, called "Blowin' in the Wind," and it epitomized some of the generational conflict that was stirring in the 60's.**

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crazy mop of hair, which his biographer Robert Shelton was later to describe as "a frizzy electric halo,"—well, that was just enough to make me decide that he'd better do the show with his hat on.

**T**he song that he had chosen to sing was a new one that he had written for his upcoming second album, called "Blowin' in the Wind," and it epitomized some of the generational conflict that was stirring in the 60's. Lyrically, it was superb; musically, it had a wonderfully pervasive line. From the first time I heard it, I couldn't get the tune or the words out of my mind.

I must admit now, rather shame-facedly, that I "chickened out" when it came to holding fast to my own camera principles where Dylan was concerned. When it came time to videotape, I instructed my cameramen to "strip-search" him, invading every inch of his privacy, from the soles of his sloppy boots, panning slowly up and across his strange amalgam of clothing, noting the cracks and tape on his guitar, close enough to read the Hohner on his harmonica, right up to the tassle on his Dutch Boy cap.

Through it all, he sang:

"The answer, my friend, is blowin,  
in the wind.  
The answer is blowin' in the  
wind. . . ."

The show worked wonderfully well, in which Dylan's one song was an outstanding cameo. When I later showed him his bit, he smiled and seemed pleased, thanked me for what I had done.

**M**ore than six months went by before I was to think of Bob Dylan again. By that time, I was working full time for Westinghouse Broadcasting, overseeing non-network programming at their stations, acting as executive producer on a wide variety of shows. One of these was a series of instructional shows developed in cooperation with Time-Life Books, around a small volume called *The Meaning of Communism*, written by two Soviet scholars: Henry Roberts, who was then Director of the Russian Institute at Columbia University, and Marshall Shulman, at that time Professor of International Relations at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

In that post-Eisenhower era, there was a great hue and cry, in most cases mandated by state boards of education, for texts which could be used at the secondary school level for instructional purposes about the "menace" of Communism. Time-Life, through its educational book subsidiary, Silver-Burdett Publishing, commissioned Roberts and Shulman to do the book, and they did it brilliantly. Directed at high school students, it was a masterfully concise work, scrupulously honest, and objective, dealing with everything from the history of the revolution to the current workings (then) of the Soviet state.

As a companion piece to the text, we produced a series of twenty-six half-hour programs with Shulman and

Roberts, drawn from the book, for distribution in the schools. The TV version of the book was also called *The Meaning of Communism*. The format was simple. We selected a group of twenty-five very bright high school seniors from the tri-state area (New York, New Jersey, Connecticut) gave them their expenses and set-up a classroom in the studio in which Roberts and Shulman, following the outline of their book, lectured to them, answered their questions, conducted a colloquy on the meaning of communism. We spent the summer videotaping those exchanges.

**N**ow, how does all of this relate to Bob Dylan? I must admit that I started it in conversation with some of the students during one of our breaks. By now, Dylan's career was in full bloom. His second album, *The Free-wheelin' Bob Dylan*, had been released by Columbia and the record stores were having trouble keeping it in stock. The baby boomers were coming of age, and they were responding enthusiastically to Dylan and his songs—deification had begun.

I overheard some of our pupils discussing the new album between takes, trading notes on some of their favorite cuts: *Blowin' in the Wind*, *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall*, *Masters of War*, *Don't Think Twice, It's All Right*. One of the kids also mentioned that he had just bought a copy of the Peter, Paul, and Mary recording of *Blowin' in the Wind*, (which was to go on and become the first Dylan record ever to go "gold," even though he didn't record it himself).

Joining their conversation, I casually mentioned that I not only knew Bob Dylan, but that I had done a program with him in the very same studios we were taping in, only six months before. (At that time, we did most of our work in the studios at 66th and Columbus, which now belong to ABC-TV and house a daytime serial.) Well,

in a matter of seconds I had achieved new status in their eyes, I had become a generational companion, transcending the years between us. (Our egos act in strange ways, don't they?)

One of the more skeptical scholars challenged me to "bring Dylan 'round to the studio so everyone can meet him!" That demand would bother me all summer.

We worked all through July and most of August on the series, scheduled to "wrap" well before Labor Day, since most of our students had commitments to colleges across the country. Unfortunately, by this time, their interest was waning, and I tried desperately to find some way to hold their attention until we had the very last program in the can.

My wife suggested the idea of a final get-together, outlining the possibilities in a party for the students who had been with us all summer immersed in Soviet studies. She quickly improvised a Russian buffet menu that included things like borscht, small meatfilled pastries call pirozki, blini, red caviar, sour cream. My response was to doubt if any of the students would respond to that exotic bill of fare; it was much more likely to turn them off. Hamburgers and hot dogs would be a more appealing carte du jour, I thought, but neither menu seemed like something that would commit any of the youngsters to hanging around until the bitter end of our taping schedule.

What could attract their attention? The answer, of course, was Dylan. But how in the world was I going to get someone whose career by now was attached to the tail of a comet to appear at a "wrap" party for twenty-five high school kids?

The following morning I called John Court. (Grossman was out of town at the time.) We traded a few friendly ripostes and then I threw my request at him, racing through the question as quickly as I could. "Would Bob be willing to make a quick appearance at a

party I'm planning for twenty-five high school students who have broken their humps all summer working for nothing on a show for Westinghouse?"

There was a long pause at the other end of the phone.

"He doesn't have to do anything," I pleaded, "just show his face and leave."

There was another long pause, I can only guess that he was stunned by my request.

He finally spoke. "Why don't you ask him yourself. He liked that Westinghouse show, and he'll remember you. In fact, he's home right now, I talked to him five minutes ago."

Court gave me Dylan's number, I called him, and he agreed to "show his face" at our wrap party, "if nothing unexpected intervened." The only question he asked me was "if there would be anyone there but those kids." I told him that I was planning on bringing my own family, but that would be it. (Shulman and Roberts were both leaving for the Soviet Union immediately following the final taping.) Finally, I told him that I would call John Court with the salient details when I made the arrangements, and Dylan's last words to me were that he "would try and make it." I hung up with that caveat still ringing in my ear.

I had no further communication with Dylan personally, but the plans for the party continued. We had rented one of the small banquet rooms at the Warwick Hotel at 54th and 6th Avenue, setting a seven o'clock hour as the time we would assemble. I called Court to give him the time and place of the party and he indicated that he would inform Dylan. Would he come? I still didn't know for sure.

When the taping had finished, I didn't build on the possibility of Dylan's appearance too much. I felt that a verbal agreement replete with disclaimers isn't the sort of contract you can really count on, and I didn't want the kids to be disappointed. A couple of the students with especially long memories tried to pin me down and

kept asking me if he would be there. I couldn't honestly promise them that he would.

**T**he party started with more promise than I thought it would. The hotel had agreed to supply some of the items on our Russian menu, and we catered the rest. The kids all showed up on time and dug into the food, chattering away about the summer's experience and their upcoming college departures. There was a double door at the side of the room, leading from the second floor hallway of the hotel. It was about a quarter to eight when the doors opened rather trepiditously and a head peeked in. The face beneath the Dutch Boy cap saw me and relaxed. The students were stunned.

No one was more surprised by his appearance than I was. Even more so at the fact that he was carrying his Gibson guitar, which he immediately began to take out of its beat-up case and tune. We exchanged almost no conversation, except when I introduced him to the students and to the members of my family. (Incidentally, my own son and daughter were bug-eyed at the magic I had been able to achieve with Dylan's presence.)

He proceeded to sit down on a chair in the middle of our small group, positioned his guitar, and then suddenly stopped.

"Do any of you have a guitar pick?" he asked.

No one did, so he pulled a plastic credit card out of his wallet and used that instead.

When he finished his first song, I offered him some of the food from our Russian buffet and he graciously turned it down, pulling me aside to make only one request—"if I could get him a bottle of rosé wine?" (I would have had ordered Dom Perignon if he wanted it.)

By the time the wine arrived, he was already well into his entire repertoire. He stayed with us throughout the en-

tire evening, singing his songs, graciously chatting with the kids, sipping at his rosé. I remember the songs, they were the ones that we all remember. He must have gone through his entire storehouse before the evening was finished.

**I**t's hard to explain what that evening I became. Dylan sat as he sang, his chair backed up against one wall. The kids were sprawled at his feet, mesmerized by each word of every song. It was the perfect audience, responding only to the artistry of the great performer they were watching. There were no huge bursts of applause at the completion of each song, but rather a series of appreciative sighs.

There was no need to indicate when the evening was finished. By that time, there was so much empathy in the room that everyone knew when it was the proper moment to put a seal on it. Dylan slowly put his guitar back in its case and the party was over. It was now well after ten o'clock and he had entertained us for over two hours.

After he left, the kids quickly said "good-bye," shouting "thank you's" over their shoulders as they hastened out of the door. It was time to go home myself.

When I came out the door of the Warwick with my family, there were all the kids. Dylan was standing there, holding his guitar case, leaning against the fender of a parked car, basking in the warmth of the appreciative students.

He didn't seem to have any place to go. I think he was a bit juiced, but I wasn't sure if it was from the rosé or the evening's ambience. We paused for a moment to thank him again, and asked if we could give him a lift home.

"We're going downtown," I said, "to the Village," which I felt would give him an opportunity to opt out if he chose.

"Yeah, that would be great, I'm going down to the Village myself," he re-

plied.

Without further ado, we all made our final farewell to the kids, got into a big Checker Cab, circled the block and headed south down 5th Avenue to Greenwich Village.

On the way home, much to my son's embarrassment, I told Dylan, that Scott, age 14, was already quite an accomplished guitarist. Whereupon, quite unbelievably, he offered to give my son his Gibson. We had a difficult time refusing his offer. I can only guess that he, too, was quite swept away by the incredible evening of which we'd all been a part.

By that time we were at 10th Street, and the cab left us off in front of our building. He kept the cab, deciding to continue on, and that's the last we ever saw of him.

He's still around, of course, and over these last twenty-five years I have followed his career with great interest. The public portrait that emerges is of an introverted, soul-searching, controversial artist, who over the years has been called everything from a genius to a sell-out, but whatever I read or hear, no one ever denies his impact on the social conscience of this country, and my mind goes back to that wonderful night in the Warwick Hotel, and I think: "What a nice man that Bob Dylan is?" There should be a place for him somewhere on television. ■

Jack Kuney who has been a director and producer at all three major networks and for several group operators, is currently on the faculty of Brooklyn College. He admits most of his assignments have not been as memorable as the one which brought him together with Bob Dylan.

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# Review and Comment

## FAIR PLAY: CBS, General Westmoreland, and How a Television Documentary Went Wrong

by Burton Benjamin with an  
Introduction by Walter Cronkite  
An Edward Burlingame Book/Harper  
& Row, New York

BY RUTH BAYARD SMITH

**S**ince its airing in January 1982, the CBS documentary, *The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception*, has been repeatedly reviewed, analyzed, and dissected. While countless books and articles have been written about the program, none achieves the stature or perspective of *Fair Play*, the recently published book by Burton (Bud) Benjamin, former vice president and director of news at CBS. Ironically, Benjamin died in September of a brain tumor, just as his book was receiving critical acclaim.

The details of the controversy surrounding *The Uncounted Enemy* are fairly well known, even to those who don't work in the business.

To recap: The documentary, produced by the CBS Reports division, charged that General William C. Westmoreland had deliberately underrepresented accounts of enemy troop strength in Vietnam. As such, it

implicated the former Commander of American troops in Vietnam in a conspiracy to delude the American public, Congress, and even President Lyndon Johnson into believing that victory at war was impending.

With the recent deaths of Benjamin and former CIA analyst and program consultant Samuel Adams, *The Uncounted Enemy* has again come into the public awareness, raising anew questions about the way news programs are put together, about the responsibility of the media and about the parameters of the First Amendment.

Eight months after the program aired, General Westmoreland brought a \$120 million lawsuit (which he later abandoned) against CBS, charging that he had been falsely portrayed. The libel trial, which coincided with that of former Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon against *Time Magazine* triggered a new trend: The media was forced to report on itself, and to many observers, the coverage was defensive and incomplete.

CBS was already reeling from a scathing attack in a cover story in *TV Guide*. The *Anatomy of a Smear: How CBS News Broke the Rules and "Got" General Westmoreland* blasted the program, saying it virtually constituted a conspiracy of its own against General Westmoreland. The article brought a host of charges against the producers, alleging they had shown

different treatment to subjects depending on their sympathies to General Westmoreland, had created distortions by editing together interviews conducted at different times, and had paid \$25,000 to Samuel Adams, their chief source of information.

As the saga unfolded, CBS management asked veteran newsman Benjamin to conduct an internal investigation. Benjamin was ambivalent about taking on the assignment, knowing that if he found nothing wrong with the program, his detractors would claim, as he puts it, "a whitewash." But if he criticized the program, he would potentially be casting doubt on the work and careers of his colleagues, particularly Mike Wallace whom he had known since their undergraduate days together at the University of Michigan.

Ultimately in his report, Benjamin concluded that although the premise presented in *The Uncounted Enemy* was valid, the program's execution had been flawed.

His excellently written book, *Fair Play*, goes well beyond the findings of the so-called Benjamin Report (which eventually was made available to General Westmoreland's attorneys, though use in the actual trial proceedings was restricted).

**B**enjamin has given us access to the story in a way that we haven't gotten in other publications on the subject.

As readers we're with Benjamin the night he watches the program at home (scheduled on a Saturday night, opposite *Love Boat* and *Fantasy Island*) and decides the documentary is as powerful as many of the early shows on his network, such as *Hunger in America* and *The Selling of the Pentagon*. We look over his shoulder as he reviews the tapes and reads the transcripts, and we listen in on his interviews with participants, from film editors and secretaries to producer

George Crile and on-air newsman Mike Wallace. We feel the tension as personalities and ambitions clashed during the making of the documentary and in its aftermath. And we absorb the criticisms he got both from CBS insiders and newspaper media columnists.

For anyone who's ever stepped foot into a TV newsroom or production studio, Benjamin's account rings true. We're all familiar with the techniques we hate to admit exist: the use of cutaways and double questioning, the less than diligent effort to locate a subject whose interview might throw off the premise of a story, the sloppy editing, and the marketing of the show through a well-known reporter, making him into more of an on-air talent than a fully participating journalist.

In *Fair Play* Benjamin gave an unequivocally honest analysis of what went wrong in the making of *The Uncounted Enemy*, yet the account is balanced and solid.

Still, as a staunch believer in a free and responsible press, he adamantly expressed his discomfort with the idea of providing fuel for media bashers. Throughout the book he disassociated himself with those on the right who want to see the dismantling of the media as we know it. Benjamin was a veteran newsman, a consummate reporter who let his viewers and readers draw their own conclusions.

The conclusions we as newsmen are forced to draw are unsettling. (In fact, when I first reviewed *Fair Play* for the *New York Times*, I too received favorable comment from people who are proud to call themselves media critics; I was no more comfortable than Benjamin had been with my new "aliens.")

Many observers worried that the public scrutiny undergone by *The Uncounted Enemy* would limit the making and airing of documentaries or other investigative pieces in the old tradition of *CBS Reports*. But television is clearly different now. The days are

long gone when the three networks dominated the market; the widespread availability of cable and other pay channels has changed that. So has the popularity of something as simple as the remote control unit (a recent study found that 75 percent of all homes report flicking in and out of television programs, never really stopping long enough to absorb much of anything).

But in an election year the questions Benjamin addressed in *Fair Play* are especially valid. One can only speculate on how he would react to the media's coverage of the Bush/Dukakis campaign.

**I** write this article before Election Day. But according to most media pronouncements George Bush has things all sewn up—he's ahead by seven points in one poll, 11 in another, and 17 in one that emerged immediately after the second Presidential debate, after Dukakis failed to land the "knockout punch" analysts insisted he needed.

Would Benjamin find favor in the media's seeming infatuation with so-called "spin doctors"? Would he support the relentless use of "sound bites," summing a candidate's day of campaigning in a catchy 30- or 60-second nugget? Would he encourage his producer to play into the hands of partisan politics, to report rumors, and unwittingly become party to one of the nastiest campaigns in recent history?

Bud Benjamin was not the type to make unilateral pronouncements and declarations; nor would he pretend to speak for all in the media. But I think he would wonder just how far we've come since television first covered a political convention in 1948 and a presidential debate in 1960.

In October 1987 Benjamin delivered the annual Edward Stasheff Lecture at the University of Michigan, a talk established by students of Professor Stasheff, a teacher of TV production, upon his retirement. In his remarks on

the "The State of Network News," he addressed many of the problems inherent in today's media. As he stated:

"The problem that television faces, in my opinion, is for creativity to keep up with the racing technology. I don't care whether or not a story is coming to you via satellite, has been written by computer and transmitted by a correspondent with an antenna implanted (perhaps surgically) in his head.

"If he can't write, he can't write—by satellite or by quill pen. If he can't report—all of the technology in the world won't save him. There is so much at stake today that if we simply go with the technology, we are going to be in trouble. There was never a time when good reporters—who can write, report, analyze, ask the right questions—were needed more."

In *Fair Play* Benjamin wrote about the notoriety surrounding his "whistle-blowing," noting ironically how he thought the media would acknowledge his death:

"I told Andy Rooney how I felt about my new eminence. After nearly thirty years at the network, after producing more than four hundred documentaries and eight hundred editions of the *CBS Evening News*, if I got hit by a truck, the modest obituary would probably carry the headline: 'Report Author Succumbs.' "

In the safety of our university classrooms, many of us openly debate the questions addressed by Benjamin in *Fair Play*. The best legacy to Bud Benjamin's excellent work would be similar debates among media practitioners. ■

Ruth Bayard Smith writes about the Midwest for the *Boston Globe* and teaches Journalism at the University of Michigan.

## **WAITING FOR PRIME TIME**

### **The Women of Television News**

**by Marlene Sanders and Marcia Rock**  
*University of Illinois Press*

**BY HERBERT DORFMAN**

**T**here's a photo tucked into a picture section of this book that catches your eye. New York Mayor John Lindsay is being interviewed on the ABC News program, *Issues and Answers* in 1967. The interviewers are ABC reporters Marlene Sanders and Mal Goode. How often, you wonder, did one of the few women in television news and one of the even fewer blacks get to do a news show together at that time? In 1967, you'd be hard put to find another such pair at the other networks—or even at ABC. Definitely a picture not for the scrapbook but the archive.

Well, both women and blacks have come a long way in television news since that time, but along very different roads. Blacks have benefitted from the civil rights ferment. Women breached the resistance through a series of individual and group assaults at all the networks and many local stations.

Watching a three-person all-news-woman panel (two from television news) questioning the candidates at the second Bush-Dukakis debate, it's clear that one of the big objectives of the women's movement—professional acceptance—has been reached. But when you step back a little, it's also clear that the acceptance is mainly on the reporting and producing level. The management ranks are still, with the inevitable exceptions, a male bastion.

Marlene Sanders' career spans most of what we regard as the history of television news. When she began,

network television news shows were 15 minutes long, black and white, and stories were shot on film. For more than three decades, she has worked in the trenches and in the HQ's of broadcast journalism. That has always been the bottom line in the business: get the story, put it together, get it on the air. She did that, she did it very well.

But reading through this book, we also know that there were very few moments when she wasn't aware that she was a woman, and in this business at least, that was rarely a plus. And that was true whether she was reporting on a war in Vietnam or producing major documentaries or even being a news vice president.

Sanders' career is tightly wound with the story of television news itself over the last thirty or more years. So there's an interesting recapitulation of some of the great events, from someone who covered them. We also get a fresh look at some political machinations behind closed doors. Don't get me wrong. Marlene Sanders is no gossip. She's not interested in who sleeps with whom. She does point out though, that very often people (usually men) with the power to spend millions of dollars and juggle the lives of others can be petty and shallow and dishonest.

The other major element of the book, co-authored with Marcia Rock, is an in-depth look at the experiences of many other television newswomen, much of it in their own words.

It has not been a struggle for all of them, any more than blacks or Hispanics coming into television today meet the same resistance or the same biases of twenty years ago. Marlene Sanders has some firm views on why it's different. "Many of the women in this book," she says, "are in their forties, the beneficiaries of the women's movement of the early 1970's. Without that particular phase of U.S. history, it is doubtful they would be in television at all. Many of the younger women in the business believe there are no limits to how far they can go. Perhaps

they are right, but they should understand the past that has made their hopes attainable." I think she wonders how many women really will understand, or remember.

Sanders is still working in television news, but there was a perceptible career coda when she left CBS News in 1987. She was victimized—indirectly—by the mass layoffs at the network. She wasn't fired, but the job she was offered in radio seemed more of a sop than an alternative, and there would be no television work. She quit, and that action, even as people were being fired, made headlines.

It wasn't that she didn't want a job, or didn't need the money. And we know that as long as you're in the organization, there's always the chance that later changes will work in your favor. I can't read Marlene Sanders' mind, but I have read her book, and I think that even after three decades, during which many women had come into television journalism, she still thought that her work and her philosophy should be an example to other women.

That was true despite the fact that she was somewhat skeptical about the idea of being a "role model." It was there, though. For example, as she leaving CBS, she ran into Faith Daniels. "Oh, no," Daniels told her, "that's terrible. You've been my role model. You've always been there for us."

Throughout this account of the career of Marlene Sanders and the growth of women in television news there runs a cautionary, even sad tone. Among her closing words, even as more women move today into the business, are these:

"Far too many women see their work as an extension of their families, even as substitutes. The women, most of them single, who had spent as much as thirty years at CBS, were shocked, even grief-stricken, when they were fired in the purges of 1985, 1986, and 1987. This was home . . . To find their

efforts swept aside was a shock for which they were ill prepared."

Marlene Sanders was not ill prepared. She is also not a cynical person by nature. But the cynicism that surfaces in this account should raise some questions for those who work or have worked in the television news business.

Of course, the industry itself has changed. As Sanders noted after her departure from CBS: ". . . the business I left hardly resembled the one I found when it all began . . ." That's all familiar by now—news operations as profit centers (or else), a hypnotic obsession with the bottom line, management by people whose management objectives are geared to stock market prices. Working in television news is much more impersonal. Perhaps that's why Sanders says to women (particularly younger women) in broadcast journalism:

"Do not mistake a job for home or family, or trusted friend. It cannot be counted on. It can turn you out in an instant."

Such a caveat will not of course stop people from knocking on the door to gain admission to the still-glamorous world of television news. Television journalism is a nice job to wake up to. Sanders acknowledges that "Those of us who have had that privilege have led interesting lives, and have done good work . . ." but now comes the sigh: ". . . when we've been allowed to."

What she remembers is not only the difficulty of being accepted as a television newswoman, but of getting male executives to accept the idea that the women's movement was real—and newsworthy. Most of this resistance and revelation was at ABC News, from 1965 to 1977, a time when women's issues were coming to a boil.

What the emerging women's movement needed, Sanders realized, was "straightforward television coverage instead of ridicule" (not focusing on 'bra burning', for example). The news coverage was in bits and pieces and

as usual the issues lost out to the giddy visuals. She pitched for a documentary on the subject, and surprisingly, got the go-ahead. *Women's Liberation*, aired in May 1970, was the first network documentary on the subject. It wasn't exactly a case of storming the ramparts, but it was a breakthrough.

Some women, though, thought that even Marlene Sanders could not be trusted, since she worked for the "establishment." At one point in the filming of the documentary, an important reel of film was stolen and later dumped in the East River. Alas, "it was indicative of the wide split among the various factions that continued for many years . . ."

The incident also didn't help the credibility of the women's movement at ABC News, where despite the greater attention to women's issues in the press, top management was unenthusiastic. The President of ABC News, Elmer Lower, was "perplexed" by a Sanders documentary in 1972, *The Hand That Rocks the Ballot Box*. According to Sanders, Lower told her he "couldn't understand why women wanted power . . . He thought they had considerable power, behind the throne, as it were."

Sanders decided to put her answer in writing. Among other things, she wrote the head of ABC News that "power in the home means . . . NO real personal effectiveness in the larger world . . . it means that women have had to be passive recipients of decisions made by others." Men, she wrote, including TV newsmen, would like it to stay that way, and many older women agree. Younger women, however, want a change, Sanders argued, and won't stop until they get it. She capped the note to her boss like this: "Let me put it one more way: would you trade your position for one of "power" in the home? Of course not. Neither would I."

Lower, always one of the classical gentlemen of television news, remained "cordial and businesslike," but

not necessarily more accepting. Sanders muses that "It might have been easier for him to grasp if I had been single. The fact that I was married, a mother, and still persisted in this madness must have been nearly incomprehensible."

Sanders had now established her persona. She trusted in the workings of objective journalism, she believed in the integrity of the women's movement, she was a role model for many women, and she was no radical. She was also a very good television journalist, and in 1976 that was recognized. She was named Vice President and Director of Documentaries for ABC News.

So the career that started in 1955 led to this: the first woman news vice president in television history. There were plenty of congratulations, but the ones from women "were particularly gratifying," with comments like: "it's about time" and "great for you, great for women." The women's tri-network committee wrote: "you have served as a role model for many of us . . ."

Sanders could control her own job, but she had no control over the politics of the news division. In less than two years, the situation changed as Roone Arledge came in as news president. She saw in him too much of the showman, not enough of the newsmen. The personal chemistry between them was weak. When she left for a producing job at CBS News, her job was taken by a woman (Pam Hill), but one with no ties to the women's movement and a husband who was a famous columnist for the *New York Times*.

**S**anders thus walked out on what was the only woman's vice presidential slot in television network news. In the next decade, a number of women moved in (and out of) vice presidential jobs at the networks. There still aren't many women vice presidents. Joan Richman, one who does fill that position at CBS News, told the authors

there would be more: "There are lots of women in middle management, and every day they're proving that they're ready."

Any discussion of women in television has to come around to the matter of age and aging. In practice, this doesn't seem to be a problem for established male TV journalists until they're in their sixties. Walter Cronkite was in his prime, they said, when he bowed out at 65. Mike Wallace is a fixture at 70. Try to imagine a 65-year anchorwoman, or a 70-year female television reporter.

No, fifty seems to be the critical age for women (assuming they don't look it). Combine the age question with the matter of looks, and the critical age may be nearer to forty. Consider remarks made to the authors by NBC's Rebecca Bell, who returned from lengthy overseas stint, turned on her television set, and "noticed something very strange. The blondes had taken control . . . young, fresh-faced, very pretty women who just didn't seem to have writing ability, or delivery . . . I saw the handwriting on the wall. I was a forty-year-old woman. . . ."

In the early 1980's, Sanders felt she was misused because of her age (over fifty) and was "increasingly angry." In network news, Barbara Walters was the only other woman over 50 still on camera in a news-oriented format.

Is age and experience an asset for a correspondent? For men, yes. For women, apparently not. At least, not yet. Some current established women correspondents (Leslie Stahl, Lynn Sherr) think the age barriers are coming down. Stahl thinks that if there is age discrimination, both men and women suffer from it. The pressure to stay young-looking is, so to speak, indiscriminate. Sherr told the authors that the good on-air people are getting older, true, but the audience is too. Viewers don't object if their favorite correspondents age gracefully, she says.

Reviewing the viewpoints of a group

of well-known women correspondents, Sanders is hopeful but skeptical that television will be forgiving when youth and prettiness give way to maturity and—horrors—wrinkles.

Marlene Sanders would be understandably chagrined if I were to treat her excellent book as some kind of valedictory. She has many years of interesting work in television ahead of her. But there is a kind of summing-up here, and very simply it says that her three decades in the television news business have been good, but they might have been great.

*Waiting for Prime Time* makes an important contribution to the library of broadcast journalism. It's a valuable book not only for students of radio and television news, and for the professionals, but also interesting for the general reader.

I like to think about an incident in which Marlene Sanders was not so much a role model as an object of admiration. Sometime in her early years at ABC, she was assigned to a story about the return to films of Patricia Neal. Neal's producer agreed to have Sanders interview her during a lunch break. Miss Neal, a major film star before her stroke, was herself the subject of much attention, but she was obviously pleased and impressed by Sanders' preparation and competence. Before the interview, she asked Sanders about her career in TV news. Afterwards, she got up to shake her hand, still looking very pleased, and said "Thanks for coming. It was a pleasure."

One would guess there are a lot of people in the television news business who feel the same way. ■

Herbert Dorfman, a writer and producer, is Deputy Director of the Television Center at Brooklyn College.

## **SPLIT IMAGES: Television and Politics in the Soviet Union**

**by Ellen Propper Mickiewicz**  
Oxford University Press, New York

**BY DONALD R. SHANOR**

**M**ikhail Gorbachev seems determined to follow the path of Ronald Reagan as his nation's first television president.

Like Reagan, he wants to use the medium to carry out a restructuring—*perestroika*—of the system he inherited from his predecessors, and he shares with him a talent for effective use of TV to sell his policies.

The Soviet leader recognized television from the start as the ideal way to mobilize a nation for reform, taking advantage of vastly increased TV set production and a satellite system able to reach all but the most isolated areas in the 11 time zones across the U.S.S.R. As this perceptive account of television in the era of *glasnost* shows, Gorbachev can either seize the tube himself (Soviet evening news formats allow him an hour and twenty minutes for a speech) or permit more aggressive investigative reporting to advance the cause of openness and restructuring.

"Nearly half the time (47%) on Soviet television news is taken up by four kinds of subjects: official governmental policy and pronouncements; official visits; activities of the Communist Party; and economic progress," the author, Ellen Mickiewicz, writes. "The last is usually a domestic story, a staged visit to a farm or factory to show the strides being made by ordinary workers and responsible managers.

"The top five subjects on the American news account for 43% of total newstime: national elections, terrorism, science/health, disasters/accidents, and crime."

On the Soviet news programs, "as

compared with the American news, the sense of the state, of the center, of the political elites is a far more obvious, powerful, and coherent theme," she stresses.

Such an impression is not surprising in view of Soviet definitions of news and the journalist's job. It is to educate and socialize the citizen, the same mission given the schools, courts, and family.

Mickiewicz documents the coming of the television age in the Soviet Union in her careful study and analysis of the potential of Soviet television to push a nation in the direction its new leader wants it to go.

Reagan and his successor in the White House have to depend on a combination of paid advertising—during campaigns—and adroit publicity management to gain a satisfactory airing of their policies before American TV news audiences. Gorbachev has it easier; not only are all the TV and newspaper journalists on his government payroll, but he can order more sets and satellites built to saturate the nation with his message.

There are other differences. More than 150 million Soviet citizens watch the evening news every day—80% of the adult population. In the United States, all three network news programs attract only 60 million viewers, about a third of U.S. adults. Americans have lots of other options, of course, but the point is that this Soviet level of acceptance of what is, after all, a government program means that for the first time, a mass public has been created. Government can speak directly to citizen. One side effect is that the nation's three million party agitators, used since Lenin's day to explain and exhort, are out of work.

More important, the government can reach this mass audience with a spin on the news that makes White House efforts seem benign. Coverage of the United States dominates the foreign news, and except for a few tentative recent efforts at objectivity, the picture

that Soviet viewers get is very negative indeed.

The author and her team measured emotion-loaded terms like "barbaric" or "progressive" and found that ABC used only one ("genocidal" about Afghanistan) in the entire five months its *World News Tonight* was monitored to compare with the Soviet news. The Soviet Union's score was 250—100 of them about the United States, and 96% of those negative.

She cites one egregious example, a documentary done by prominent journalists, in which footage of U.S. warplanes and bombs is mixed with shots of fur-coated Fifth Avenue shoppers, the homeless, and Klan cross burning. It may be some comfort to Americans that not all of this propaganda reaches the mark. True, Soviet television news broadcasts are watched by eight out of ten citizens, but many of those viewers are poorly educated and almost all lack experience in absorbing and evaluating messages about the outside world. Soviet surveys have found that nearly half of those asked did not know what imperialism meant and two-thirds could not distinguish between reactionary and liberal.

Mickiewicz, who has a background in both Russian and social science research methods, provides a thorough analysis of Gorbachev's efforts but seldom lets her expertise get in the way of the telling of a good story. She and her Emory University research team approach the subject sensibly and directly. To find out what Soviet television news is like, and to compare it with American television news, they simply sat down and watched a great deal of both. The Soviet first program and its nightly nine p.m. news show, *Vremya*, reached Emory in Atlanta through some sophisticated satellite reception work; ABC was watched for comparison. Readers who fear the formulae and columns of figures of many communications studies have nothing to worry about here. Mickiewicz writes about her findings in plain English,

and she backs up her viewing and calculating with plenty of live interviews, both of Soviet and American correspondents and producers.

What is notable about the book is the careful analysis of the raw material of the study from many different perspectives: What countries and regions are covered by the TV news of the United States and the Soviet Union; which ones are ignored by both sides (Central and West Africa), and who the main newsmakers are. The results include:

—Russians get to see a great deal more coverage of the United States than the Americans do of the Soviet Union—more than twice as much air time in the period of the study.

—Under Gorbachev, not only glasnost—openness—is encouraged for Soviet reporters and producers, but a new term, *operativnost* or timeliness, has come into play, in part because of world condemnation of the delay in reporting Chernobyl's radioactive clouds.

—Crime took up 8 per cent of ABC news time and only a single percent of Soviet. Crime "and other traits inappropriate to the communist society of the future" is generally kept off the news, Mickiewicz notes.

This is an important book that deserves a wide audience: journalists and media specialists, political scientists and Sovietologists. Not only does it describe dynamics of Gorbachev's television strategy in terms so current that the unrest in Armenia and Azerbaijan is included, but it provides the political and ideological premises for it. With these two kinds of information, specialists in many fields will be able to make some good guesses on future Soviet media policy. ■

Donald R. Shanor is on the faculty of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.





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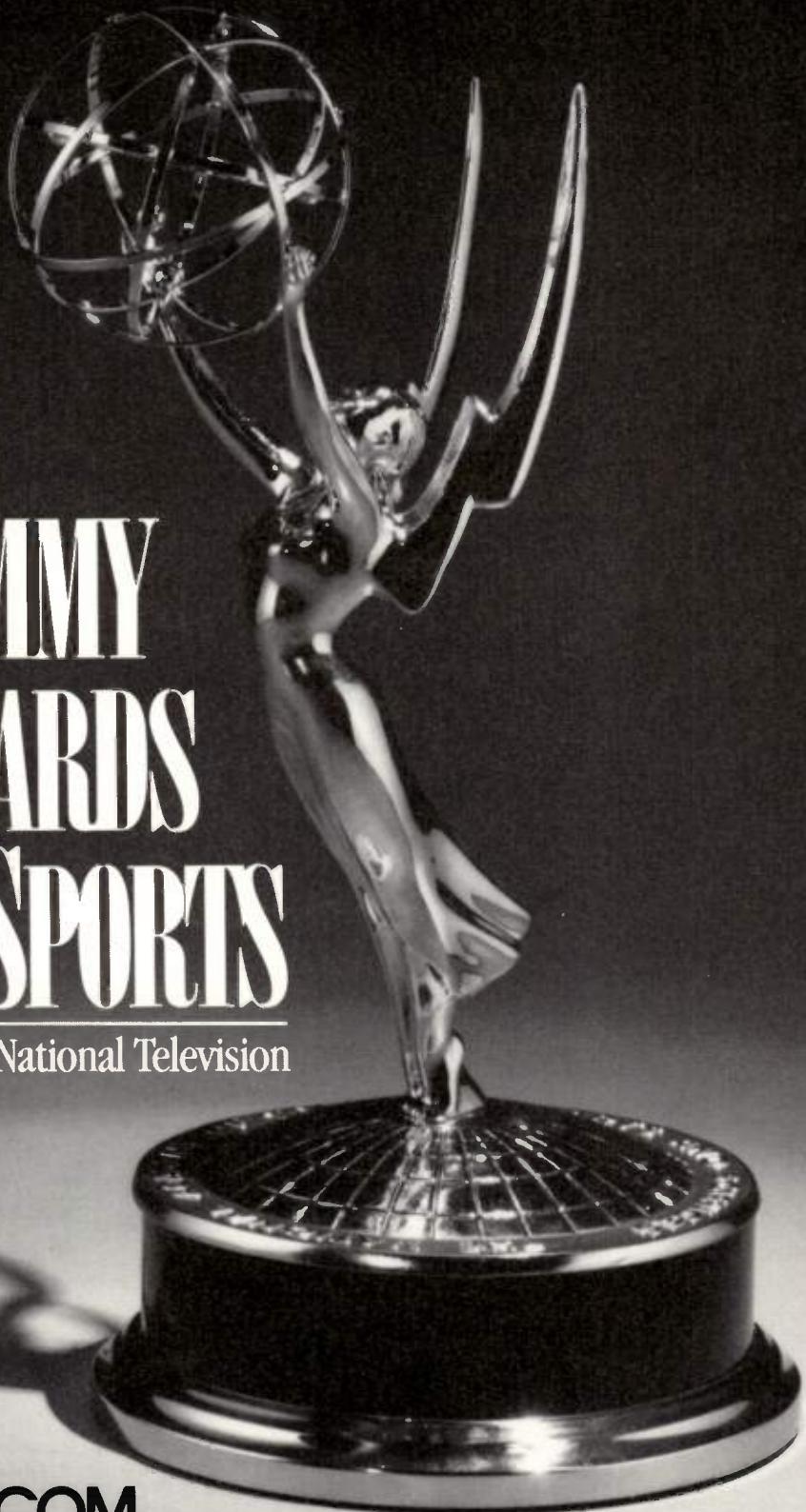
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