

TELEVISION QUARTERLY



\$8.00

VOLUME XXIX

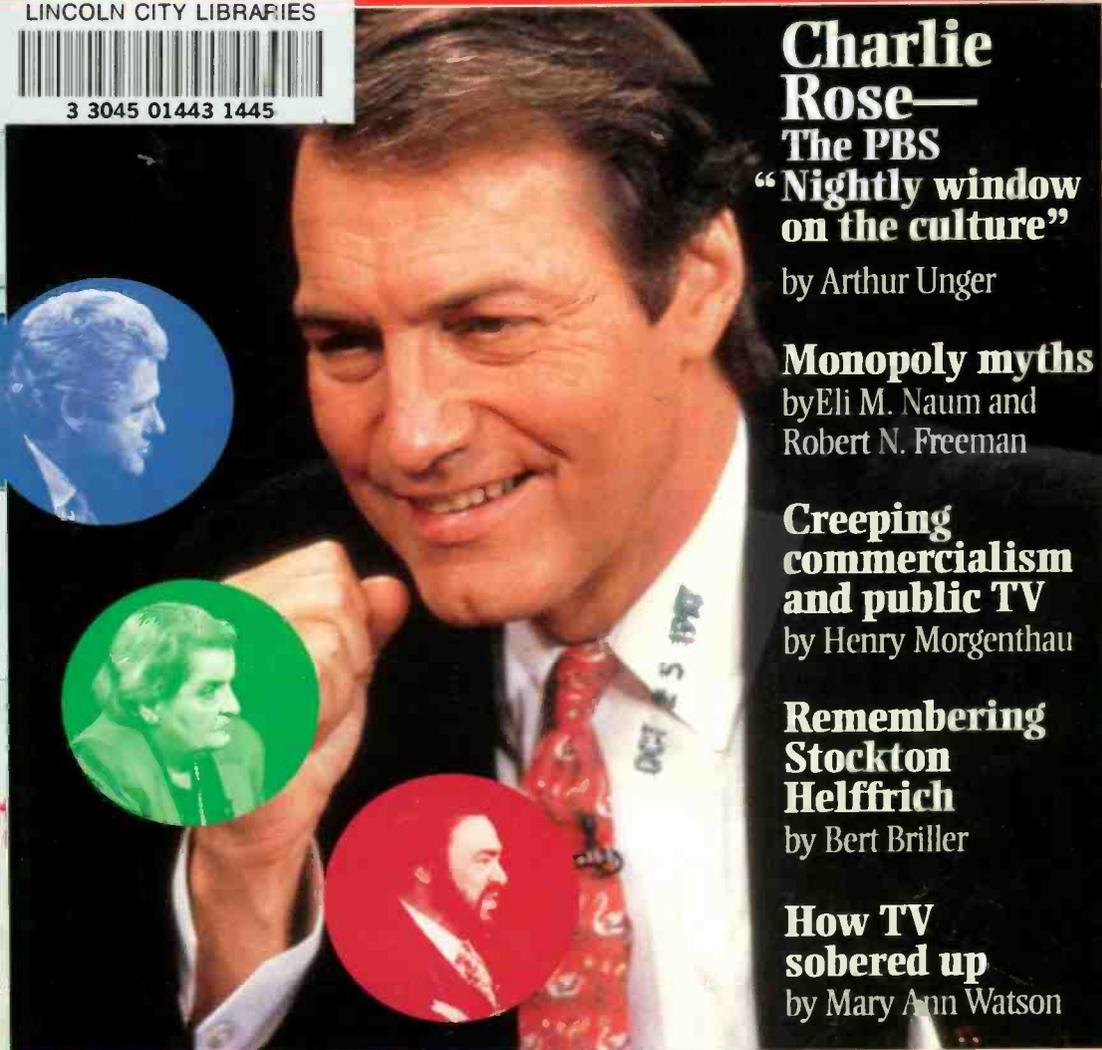
NUMBER 1

1997

LINCOLN CITY LIBRARIES



3 3045 01443 1445



**Charlie Rose—
The PBS
“Nightly window
on the culture”**

by Arthur Unger

Monopoly myths

by Eli M. Naum and
Robert N. Freeman

**Creeping
commercialism
and public TV**

by Henry Morgenthau

**Remembering
Stockton
Helffrich**

by Bert Briller

**How TV
sobered up**

by Mary Ann Watson

TELEVISION
QUARTERLY
111 W. 57TH ST.
NEW YORK
N.Y. 10019



*****MIXED ADC 430

LINCOLN CITY LIBRARIES
136 SOUTH 14TH ST
REFERENCE DEPT
LINCOLN NE 68508

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
COLUMBUS, OH
PERMIT NO. 2443

WHEN YOUR FOCUS IS ON EXCELLENCE, IT SHOWS.



Fujinon. Winner of the Emmy in Lens Technology.*

At Fujinon, we're constantly "pushing the envelope" in lens technology. In fact, the road to our Emmy stretches back to 1985, when we unveiled the first lens for 3-CCD cameras. Since then, Fujinon's 3-CCD prism optics lenses have been accepted as the standard throughout the industry. And today, many of these breakthroughs,

AT such as Aspheric Technology, are employed in the lenses you see above.

Fujinon. Innovation you can put to work... every day. For more information on any of Fujinon's lenses, call 1-800-553-6611.



Broadcast & Communications Products Division

FUJINON INC. 10 High Point Dr., Wayne NJ 07470-7434 (201) 633-5600
FUJINON OPTICAL CO., LTD. 1-324 Utsunomiya City, Saitama 330 Japan
Phone: 048-82152, FAX: 048-651-8517, TELEX: J22885

FOCUSED ON THE FUTURE

*Implementation in lens technology to achieve compatibility with CCD sensors.

TELEVISION QUARTERLY



VOLUME XXIX NUMBER 1

THE JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF TELEVISION ARTS AND SCIENCES

EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor

RICHARD M. PACK

Chairman

HERMAN W. LAND

Vice Chairman

FREDERICK A. JACOBI

Members

GEORGE BACK

DAVE BERKMAN

ROYAL E. BLAKEMAN

BERT R. BRILLER

JOHN CANNON

SCHUYLER G. CHAPIN

MELVIN A. GOLDBERG

LAWRENCE LAURENT

HOWARD A. MYRICK

RAQUEL ORTIZ

JOHN V. PAVLIK

MARLENE SANDERS

QUENTIN SCHAFFER

RON SIMON

MARY ANN WATSON

Special Correspondent

ARTHUR UNGER

Graphics Director

ROBERT MANSFIELD

Business Manager

TRUDY WILSON

Television Quarterly

ISSN: 0040-2796

Television Quarterly is published quarterly by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, 111 West 57th Street, New York, New York, 10019 (212) 586-8424. Members of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences receive TELEVISION QUARTERLY as part of membership services. Inquiry regarding membership should be directed to the office of The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. BUSINESS ADVERTISING OFFICES: Television Quarterly, 111 West 57th Street, New York, NY 10019. EDITORIAL OFFICE:

Television Quarterly, same address. The subscription rates for non-members, libraries and others is \$30.00 a year and \$8.00 a copy in the United States; \$35.00 a year and \$8.00 a copy in all other countries. (Special Student Subscription \$22.00). Subscription orders should be sent to TELEVISION QUARTERLY, The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, 111 West 57th Street, New York, New York, 10019. The opinions expressed herein are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of The National Academy or the members of the Editorial Board of Television Quarterly.

Copyright © 1997 by The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

2

Charlie Rose: PBS's "Nightly Window on the Culture"
by Arthur Unger

18

The Media Monopoly and Other Myths
by Eli M. Naum and Robert N. Freeman

24

How TV Sobered Up
by Mary Ann Watson

30

Creeping Commercialism and Lost Weekends
by Henry Morgenthau

38

Everyone Leaves Mad
by Marlene Sanders

42

Guerrilla TV
by Deirdre Boyle

52

Conscience of the Industry: Stockton Helffrich
by Bert Briller

58

The Message is the Message
by Christopher Lukas

64

First Amendment Programs
by Jack Isenhour and Sandra Dickerson

69

Review & Comment:

Glued to the Set: The 60 Television Shows and Events That Made Us Who We Are Today, reviewed by Lawrence Laurent

Defining Vision: The Battle for the Future of Television reviewed by John V. Pavlik

Bosnia By Television, reviewed by Bernard S. Redmont

Charlie Rose: PBS's "Nightly Window on the Culture."

Sometimes he looks like he just rolled out of bed, rambles, interrupts interviewees, giggles too much, but is regarded by many as a kind of "intellectual bedtime snack." Charlie Rose impresses TVQ's special correspondent as an earnest man of high ideals and "rampant curiosity."

By Arthur Unger

I dressed for the occasion. Since Charlie Rose always appears on camera on PBS in a business suit, for this interview I donned my own dark suit, white shirt and silk rep tie, determined to out-preppy Charlie.

He arrived at the studio in the Bloomberg TV offices on 59th St. and Park Ave., where he tapes his shows, in sweater, khakis, and Timberland work boots.

So, I loosened my tie and looked around the Bloomberg reception area on the 15th

floor. There were 13 monitors-all featuring Bloomberg programming-and many food stalls scattered around the huge room, counters overflowing with fresh fruit, pastries, fruit juices, soft drinks, bagels and rolls etc. It was like breakfast in a Tel Aviv hotel, with all manner of Bloomberg employees feasting and chatting together, the suits socializing with the jeans.

Charlie explained that Michael Bloomberg's egalitarian philosophy caused him to eliminate elevators between

his five floors, forcing employees to climb stairs, and, hopefully, socialize enroute. I nodded approvingly but thought: I could be just as egalitarian in an elevator.

As is so often the case on his weeknightly show, Charlie Rose's hair was tousled and he appeared tired, although it was only 9 a.m. and he had a full day's schedule ahead of him. Maybe all that socializing I had read about in the gossip columns was getting to him. His current fiancée is Amanda Burden, daughter of Babe and Bill Paley, and they seem to attend all of the city's major events.

Later, Charlie denied being a benefit-hopper.

He brought with him a file of E-mail communications from viewers since he claims his office doesn't bother to maintain a media clipping file. I know that because it was impossible to find clips about his show either in his own office or in the press department of WNET, where the show originates. Charlie explained that Bloomberg provides the studio mainly because he likes to have access to Charlie's high-profile guests.

I scanned the E-mail communications file . . . it appeared to be a fair cross-section of pros and cons: typical is one which attempted to compliment him by calling him "an intellectual bedtime snack."

"Is that a compliment?" I asked. He shrugged his shoulders.

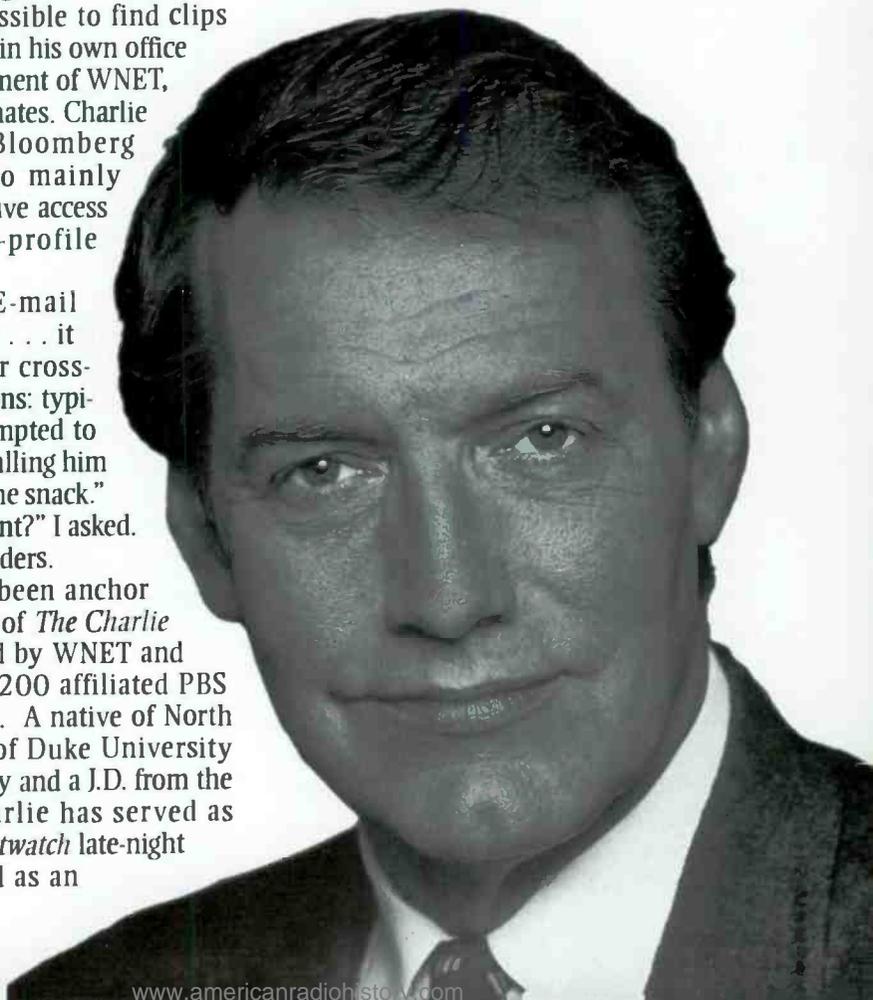
Charlie Rose has been anchor and executive editor of *The Charlie Rose Show*, presented by WNET and aired by more than 200 affiliated PBS stations, since 1993. A native of North Carolina, graduate of Duke University with an A.B. in history and a J.D. from the School of Law, Charlie has served as anchor of CBS's *Nightwatch* late-night interview show and as an

executive producer for Bill Moyers, among other news positions.

Emmy and Peabody-award winner Rose has moderated many other special shows. But he got his start in TV journalism full-time in 1974 as a managing editor for Bill Moyers, with whom he still maintains a steady relationship.

Now, a sophisticated citizen of New York City, he travels in top-level social circles, maintaining a townhouse in Manhattan and a summer place in the Hamptons as well as a farm in North Carolina. His name is constantly linked in the columns with Amanda Burden.

Funded mainly by the USA Networks cable channel, Charlie is proud of the fact that he does not accept funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) and finds his own funding. Other under-



writers are The Robert Wood Johnson Jr. Charitable Trust, The Vincent Astor Foundation, Rosalind P. Walter, and Union Pacific Corp. He does not find anything wrong in USA using its underwriting as a method of improving its image. "If it works that way," he told me, "I am pleased for both of us."

Many viewers have some reservations about the Charlie Rose style but still refuse to give him up because, after all, there is no alternative high-IQ interviewer except, perhaps, Ted Koppel on ABC and Brian Lamb on C-SPAN. Charlie's guests cover a wide range of expertise—he claims that his main asset in choosing them and interviewing them is what he calls his "rampant curiosity."

Charlie interrupts too much, almost everybody, including Charlie Rose himself, critiques. But, unlike the case of Dick Cavett, who used to interrupt his guests in order to flaunt a clever observation of his own, Charlie Rose interrupts out of sheer exuberance as he becomes excited by the conversation.

Another criticism is that his questions are too soft. "My questions are as tough as anything you will hear on *60 Minutes*," he said, "but they are asked in a way that doesn't slap the guest around."

When compared to David Letterman he observed: "Letterman says he wants his guests to come out and perform but I want them to tell who they really are."

A recent *Esquire* survey compared the time guests talked in relation to the time the host talked. Letterman was clocked at three minutes to the guests' four minutes. Charlie was clocked at the same length as his guests. Oprah Winfrey, by the way, allows guests to talk twice the length she does and Larry King allows guests to outtalk him three minutes to one. Phil Donahue was the champ, however, with seven minutes for every three by a guest.

However, just about every word Charlie

utters on camera rings with his overwhelming sincerity that borders on pompous but always manages to stop just short of humble. Some of it is vague and long-winded, it's true, but all of it is aimed at evoking truth.

However, sincere as he normally seems, Charlie is not above trying a bit of shameless manipulation to fit his own agenda. For instance, at the end of our chat, he said: "I think you're very good; you should come here working for me, helping me put this together rather than working for these magazines." Oh, subtly, thy name is not Charlie Rose!

Is there any key to the range of Charlie's guests? And the range is great—everybody from rock stars to politicians to athletes to authors etc.

"Simply my rampant curiosity," he insisted. "The trick is to engage them . . . I try to tap into their passion!"

"Curiosity," "engagement" and "passion" are the words Charlie repeated very often during our conversation in referring to his guests. But those words fit Charlie Rose himself—overloaded with curiosity as he engages his interviewer completely with his unique passion for the job he loves so much.

What follows is the conversation with Charlie Rose. Although the chronology has been changed here and there for reasons of continuity and there has been some editing due to space requirements, all the answers are verbatim.

* * * * *

Unger: *I've stolen some questions that Charlie Rose asks people, like "how do you measure success for yourself?"*

Rose: I measure professional success in terms of quality of the programming that we present to the country. I measure the quality by selection, people, ideas, how well we select, discover the people, how well we prepare and how well we execute those ideas. How good are we at delivering

something that people have not seen or heard before in a way that people are more honest, more candid, more given to do their best.

Personal success has to do with the quality of my life in terms of my responsibilities to myself in terms of how well I live up to the values that I learned from my parents and from school, church. . . .

Unger: *Does your professional life overlap your social life?*

Rose: Clearly, it does overlap my social life in a sense that my social life I view as all those things that I do. If I go to make a speech—that's my professional life. I learn something about the institution where I am speaking. I was at Harvard several weeks ago and interacted with people who gave me ideas about programs. But you also learn something about life—you meet people who impact on your life constantly. I am known because I am a visible person, because of this huge medium I work within, so therefore people interact with me and you learn from them.

My social life in New York City is connected to what I do on television—social life in the broadest sense of what I do, not in the sense of society, which I am not quite sure what that is. My social life is a product of who I am and what I want to do with my curiosity. And my program is a reflection of my curiosity—and those two things come together. I'm constantly in the process of living my life day-to-day, meeting interesting people who tell me about ideas.

Unger: *Do you book these people yourself?*

Rose: Oh, we have several bookers. We do a daily show five nights a week, often with three segments. Most of the ideas are a product of what I would like to do, what producers would like to do, what's brought to us because of books, film, events. What I do is say yes, no, yes, no, yes, no as exec-

utive producer of the program. But I also initiate a lot of the ideas as well.

The actual calling, which is the booking process—75% of that is done by someone other than me. It's done by me if I think the only way to get a guest on the program is for me to place a call. It's done by me if I know the person, and I owe it to them to call myself.

Unger: *So it might be somebody you may have met socially.*

Rose: Sure. It may be that I'm at a dinner, and sitting next to me is someone who is doing something that I had no awareness of—medicine, health, science. I'm interested in art, architecture, business, technology.

Unger: *Just how spontaneous is the show? Do you go on air with an interview that you did that same day?*

Rose: All the time. 70% to 90% of what we do is the same day.

Occasionally, we hold it because we have an embarrassment of riches, because something is more timely and has to get on the air, and something comes up later in the day. I never know what the program will look like on the morning of the broadcast, unless it's a one-hour conversation with someone like Michael Bloomberg. We did an hour with Bloomberg and I was prepared to delay that if some hard news event developed that was important for us to focus on. We rarely go live, but I will go live if the President gives a news conference, or if there's a breaking story that merits our attention.

Unger: *Do you worry about the impact on the people of what you're doing?*

Rose: I don't worry about it. I hope the impact of what we do is positive. I think we are, more than any other program on television, bar none, provided with the widest range of access to the people who shape our culture. There are more Nobel

laureates, authors, most poets, more scientists, more economists, more people in the world of politics who come to this program than any other program for a sit-down, lengthy interview.

More than I think any other program in terms of the range of guests and subject matter. So, if we do our job well, the impact will be positive. We're not exploitive, we're not sensationalistic. What we try to do is engage people and tap into their passion, their intelligence and find out what it is that they have to say about the human condition and their contribution to society.

Unger: *Another Charlie Rose question: What are you discovering about yourself?*

Rose: In the broader sense, I'm discovering that I may be the luckiest person around because this is the best job in television. I am discovering that you can't do it all by yourself, that you need to make sure that you engage people who want to help, in order to be able to manage your time and match opportunity with resource. I'm discovering that the more you do this, the better you are at it. And the better you are at it, the more opportunities it offers you to do more.

Unger: *What's next after this show?*

Rose: I don't know. I can't imagine a program that I would rather do than this program. It's difficult to have my eye on another goal. I would like to have the time to do specials. I have done three on well-known artists—Vermeer, Picasso, and Cezanne. We did a special at the University of Cincinnati—an hour of some of the best architects in America. They aired as specials on the PBS schedule. In fact, the Vermeer program received a huge audience here in New York and around the country because it showed public television doing something unique and different.

I went to the National Gallery, and with

the curator toured the exhibition of Vermeer which most people didn't get to see—and there was a problem with the government shutdown. Through our cameras and through the genius of the curator and through my gentle prodding of him just to tap into his passion for Vermeer, we were able to deliver the next best thing to being there. No one else did that but us.

There will not be another exhibition on Vermeer—the last one was 300 years ago—because the paintings are so precious and the people don't like to see them travel. And that's why, when you ask about quality and you ask about how we measure success, that's doing something that no one else was doing, and doing it well because the pieces came together.

Unger: *Do you regret not having done them as part of the Charlie Rose Show?*

Rose: No, I don't. I may later broadcast them as part of the *Charlie Rose Show*, but they were separately funded by other people. A prime-time audience is a larger audience than I have at 11 o'clock or 12 o'clock depending on where I'm aired, and therefore a lot more people get to see them. Now you can't assume that everybody stays up until 11 o'clock. There's a much larger audience to attract at 9 o'clock than there is at 11 o'clock.

Unger: *Do you feel that you are defined at all by your funders, by your underwriters?*

Rose: No. In fact, I think that I get praised for the fact that I raise my funding myself and that I don't take any money from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). I think we receive the applause of the community.

Unger: *Does the USA channel somehow seem at odds with the Charlie Rose concept?*

Rose: No. Well, two things about USA. One: I'm not the only thing that they do that they believe is a public-spirited invest-

ment in quality television. They have a series of things that they've done called "Erase the Hate" which is a splendid idea well done by USA. And they view my program as an opportunity to show their commitment to quality television in a different arena.

Unger: *So, in a way, they're using you to improve their image.*

Rose: Well, if it works that way, I'm pleased for both of us.

Unger: *What are you proudest of having accomplished so far in your career?*

Rose: A reputation for quality, a standard of excellence, integrity, and respect from people that I work with.

Unger: *Who would you say is your competition?*

Rose: I don't think anyone does what we do. Our competition is ourselves to be better than we were.

Unger: *Do you have any mentors?*

Rose: Bill Moyers, certainly, because we have worked so closely together. He was a mentor. Frank Stanton has been a mentor because of his remarkable integrity and taste. My father had a major influence on me, not as a mentor but as a father. I've taken lessons from a range of people that I think make a difference in our business—just by observation, admiration for their work.

Unger: *Your first job in TV was with Moyers, wasn't it?*

Rose: First real job.

Unger: *And that came about through more or less networking or personal contact.*

Rose: Yeah, in a way. Not my networking, but . . .

Unger: . . . *your ex-wife.*

Rose: My ex-wife, my great and wonder-

ful ex-wife and friend. Mary was working in television. I was working as a lawyer/business advisor here in New York, and Mary was working at CBS, and then later worked at the BBC. And she would occasionally ask me to do something freelance for the BBC. I was doing some other freelance work and in that capacity the opportunity to do something about Lyndon Johnson came up. I made several calls to Bill to get him to sit for an interview with me and had not reached him, but that was the end of it—nothing more happened. And Mary sat with Bill one day at lunch—one of the typical luncheons that take place in New York City where someone is being honored or some subject is being discussed—and she was at his table. She was her normal, intelligent, charming and engaging self, and Bill, being the same, they had a very good conversation including talk about me.

As a result of that, Bill asked me to come to his office for a cup of coffee. I did. And when I left his office, he offered me a job to work with him on his new series that he was planning called *Bill Moyers' International Report*. I had great admiration for him. I loved the idea of doing something with someone whose standards I respected, so I said yes.

I have Mary to thank for that, and, Bill because he gave me an opportunity, when I didn't have a lot of experience, to come on board with him. Whatever he saw in me, which I suspect was just nothing more than rampant curiosity, I'm always grateful because he did see it.

Unger: *Would you say that "rampant curiosity" is one of your most important assets?*

Rose: Yeah, I do. Probably yours, too. I mean, I think that's what makes reporters go, and critics, and essayists. It is the notion of looking at things and having them jump out at you.

I just saw the cover of *Scientific Ameri-*

can magazine and the subject jumped out at me.

“Special on Gene Therapy, How It Will Work Against Cancer, AIDS, Alzheimer’s, and More.” That’s a fascinating television program. I’m curious about these things.

I read seven papers every morning, and therefore when I do, I see lots of ideas as to what we ought to be doing on our program.

Unger: So, basically, Charlie, you follow your own curiosity?

Rose: Yes.

Unger: Does the need of the public come into that?

Rose: Sure, but it’s never just been for me, “what’s good for the public.” I am shaped by what I read and driven by my own curiosity. I have more or less enthusiasm for individual projects. Start the morning reading seven or eight newspapers, and looking at stories that might be right for the *Charlie Rose Show*. Many other reporters throughout this country do the same thing—assignment editors and Bill Moyers—so many people who are sort of part of the information process in America. We look at those ideas that are there and respond to them. There are certain things that we don’t do very well as a television program, that I don’t attempt to do.

Unger: Can you give me an example?

Rose: A natural disaster in another place. For example, there’s not much I can do about an earthquake in Iran. I’m aware of it. On the other hand I’ve done a number of programs about what American foreign policy ought to be about Iran because I have access in New York and in Washington to people who have informed ideas about that subject. And that subject, I’m curious about.

I’m lucky that I have a wide range of curiosity, but it’s not just about what I

think is “good” for America, a place that I have very strong feelings about. I am a citizen of this republic, and I believe strongly about its challenges and its opportunities. I have the good fortune to be in a position where part of my responsibility is to read, absorb, discuss the subject matter of the conversation of America as a surrogate.

Unger: Does this result in a political stance?

Rose: No. Not a political stance in terms of a liberal/conservative spectrum. A political stance perhaps between activism and passivism. I feel strongly that as a country we have responsibilities because of who we are, a main superpower, because of our wealth, and because of our resources, and because of our opportunities that we have responsibilities as a great nation. But I also think that is important to say that our program has, I think, won the respect of everybody on the political spectrum from the left to the right, from the right to the left, because we offer them access to our program, engage in discussions about a whole range of political opinions in America.

Unger: I gather that you have never done an O.J. Simpson interview type story. Is there one that you would do?

Rose: Oh, sure. I have done them, but not many. I’ve done them with people who were principals, like Barry Scheck, the attorney. After the trial his first television appearance was on my program.

I never tried to interview Simpson. I don’t do interviews the way that most of the other media—Larry King and others—have done.

There are too many subjects that interest me.

Our problem on this broadcast is never not having another subject matter. Our problem is being able to be as good as we want to be on the subject matter. Our problem is not ideas—that doesn’t say

that we shouldn't be responsive to ideas we don't have, and we are. It's never a problem of not having enough ideas. It's just crazy that people think that I'll burn out. It is so fulfilling to have this opportunity to engage the most intelligent, the most interesting, the most creative people in a whole spectrum of life: science, medicine, health, sports!

Unger: *How much research do you do? Or does your staff do it all?*

Rose: We all do a lot. We take pride in that. Even more than I think is measured by an audience. My responsibility is to prepare well in the same way that the audience would prepare well if they had the time. So, in a way, I'm the surrogate for the audience. I owe it to the audience. If I'm asking them to come spend time with me, I owe it to them to be prepared.

Now, there's a limit to how much you can prepare in a 24-hour cycle if you're the only anchor. And also if you do what I like to do, which is get around the country. I do a lot of lectures at universities. When I do travel I have to prepare additional programs while I'm away, that kind of thing.

Unger: *When you go on air, do you have notes?*

Rose: Frequently I have quotations, things like that, that I want to read, but I don't really have questions per se. I have notes to myself that I might want to remember. I think that's probably helpful as long as it doesn't get in the way of spontaneity. The most important thing about conversation in an interview is to listen, but also you can't just listen, you have to hear what somebody is saying, so that you can seize the moment.

But to do that and too be able to seize the moment and to be able to take it in directions, you have to know something about what the person said before and know something about what they're leav-

ing out in order to make it an effective interview.

I've been criticized because I interrupt too much when I have these great guests. I'm guilty of that. It's not to be clever, it's not to show people how much I know. It's my exuberance for the ideas and for the passion that I hear, not because I want to show how clever I am as some might think.

It's something I need to keep in reasonable check—I also think at the level that I'm at and the number of years I've been doing this, you constantly have to watch yourself, or you slip into a pattern. It's like an athlete, like a golfer. You have to make sure that you are freshly engaging yourself as well as the guest. And I think I sometimes rush into silence too quickly.

You know, somebody will stop and I'm there because I'm trying to fill the silence. I'm listening to what they're saying and I want to respond, and I wait. Not long enough some times. If I would just sit back.

Unger: *But of course, I'm doing the same thing with you right now. I suddenly realize that time is going by and how much time are we going to have. I think I'd better go to the next one. Would you like to be on commercial television?*

Rose: Sure, but I would not like to be on commercial television in lieu of being on public television. I want to do the program I do, and I want to do the program I do better. I have lots of friends and lots of admiration for commercial television, and if I could find a way to do both, I will

Unger: *Do you think there's a place on commercial television for your kind of show?*

Rose: Not exactly. Essentially what I do is unedited. Somebody comes in and we engage him, and then bring the next person in and engage them. There are other programs that proceed on the same basic idea that are successful—Larry King

for instance on cable, but it doesn't reach a wide audience.

Unger: *King prides himself on not preparing.*

Rose: He's wrong about that. I think it shows.

Unger: *Have you ever rejected an interview because of pressure from an underwriter?*

Rose: No. I've never done anything at all because of pressure or fear from an underwriter. Or from anyone. I think people know about me that I'm (a) strong, (b) they respect the editorial product that I deliver. So they don't want to mess with me.

Unger: *Here's another Charlie Rose question: What embarrasses you on the air and also in life—or are they the same things?*

Rose: That's a good question. I didn't realize I asked so many good questions. What embarrasses me on the show is . . . to feel that I haven't gotten the best out of a guest, and that I haven't been as good as I want to be.

Sometimes the audience won't know that. Sometimes they will. Or if I think I've chose the guest badly. If the guest doesn't do well, I don't look for scapegoats. I blame myself. What embarrasses me in my private life is my impatience.

Unger: *Impatience with people?*

Rose: Yeah, I drive too hard. I push myself because my genetic makeup is to do too much in a day, and therefore I push people too hard. Not just my staff but people in every area. Then I'm impatient and lose my temper.

Unger: *Now some simple-minded things. Who was your best interview?*

Rose: Arthur Ashe was the best because he was a man of enormous integrity and commitment. He had an extraordinary sense of quality and excellence. He had performed brilliantly on the tennis court

and in life, was suffering from AIDS, and I just took this opportunity to talk about his life. He made the famous statement that later got repeated in the obituary that AIDS was much less a difficulty for him than facing up to racism in his life.

Also among the best were Newt Gingrich and George Mitchell.

Unger: *And the worst?*

Rose: The people that were the worst are those people who didn't come to be engaged by the program, who didn't understand the program and who had an agenda. And who also lumped all television interviews together and had no sense of distinguishing between what we do and others do.

Unger: *Do those tend to be stars?*

Rose: Mainly entertainers, more entertainers than anybody else. Or people on some extensive book tour. Not all. They're rare, there are very few.

Unger: *Is there a question that you would never ask?*

Rose: I can't think of one. You know, I have a certain respect for the privacy of people. I have no interest in cheap shots. I have no interest in exploitation and I have no interest in sensationalizing the subject.

I've always believed that if the guest understands and respects you, and knows that your curiosity is genuine, you can almost go anywhere. I would not ask about sexual preference if I knew that the person did not want to talk about it and had not talked about it. I would, on the other hand, ask about sexual preference if it was relevant and if I knew the person had talked about it before—that's the kind of respect I have for people.

If they come on the program and say to me, "I don't want to talk about this." I respect that. On the other hand, there are a lot of subject matters in which I will say to guests who come on and don't want to talk

about something. "All you have to do is say 'I don't want to talk about it.'" I may say, "Why?" And then you can say to me, "I just choose not to talk about it. Because it's "too painful" or "because it's none of your business." Don't be afraid to say, "I don't want to talk about it. It's not a subject that's relevant to who I am today." But I may follow up and say, "Why?"

Unger: As you did with Jodie Foster.

Rose: Sure. "If you continue along this line, I'm gonna walk," is what Jodie said. We were talking about the young man who shot President Reagan.

Unger: *I did an interview with her way back then.*

Rose: Did the same thing with you?

Unger: Yes.

Rose: But the point is, I felt I had to ask her about this young man since it had been so significant in his life and her life in causing her to feel so strongly and to feel victimized by it. You have to ask that because everybody knew about it, see? It was public knowledge.

Unger: *Unlike Liza Minelli, who said "I don't want to talk about my mother" when I interviewed her.*

Rose: I would ask her about her mother.

Unger: *But then she talked about her mother. She really wanted to talk about her mother.*

Rose: I find that frequently in people. And I also find in doing a nightly program that at least half of the time, it's not the person, it's the public relations person.

Unger: *I find much more problem dealing with their PR people. . .*

Rose: Sure, they have some notion that they want to protect their client, so they will say he or she doesn't want to talk about this when in reality the client has no

fear of talking about it.

Unger: *Well it's the only power that the public relations persons have and they want to exert that power. Is there one question that never fails to get a good response?*

Rose: Oh, sure. I have a list of them. "Who's influenced your life?" is always a good question. It never fails. "What impact did your parents have on you? What is there about you that's not true?" I've got a list of those. Everybody has a story of some kind. I can pretty much uncover that story and make an interesting relevant interview of the person. But if I knew going in much more of their history, had done much more research about the person, then I know not only how to explore the general and find it, but also know how to find things that they may not bring up. And that's why research and information is so crucial to doing your job well. It's like practice is for a golfer. It's like a library is for a biographer. It's essential. As long as you don't lose spontaneity.

Unger: *Okay, Charlie, now that you've given me that advice, what misconception about you would you like most to dispel?*

Rose: Mainly that the public is not interested. It is that a program like mine, which is just two people in a dark room at a table—so-called "talking heads"—is not engaging television. It is. There is nothing more engaging than two people you're interested in, that you admire, engaged in subject matter that an audience can connect with, can explore with their own curiosity.

Unger: *Do you think you are a good interviewee?*

Rose: No.

Unger: *Okay, I'd like to do something that I do in most of these conversations—name some people and have you give a short reaction. Okay, David Letterman?*

Rose: At his best, the best late-night host in the entertainment area.

Unger: *Jay Leno?*

Rose: The best monologue of anybody in late-night television.

Unger: *Phil Donohue?*

Rose: An authentic original who had a profound impact on television by showing and respecting the intelligence of the viewer and the guest.

Unger: *Jerry Springer?*

Rose: Probably someone who's enormously intelligent but did programming that defied my comprehension. This is a man who had been a young mayor of Cincinnati, who had been a respected journalist in Cincinnati, and to end up doing the kind of programming he did made me ask why.

Unger: *Rush Limbaugh?*

Rose: A character, an entertainer, one of the three or four most interesting radio personalities.

Unger: *Ted Koppel.*

Rose: An artist within his subject range.

Unger: *Brian Lamb?*

Rose: Created a superb network.

Unger: *Geraldo Rivera?*

Rose: I admire what he's done on the Simpson case. He's someone who tackled it seriously and informed himself about it, so that people who were caught up in that drama, which was an American drama, could be informed.

Unger: *Charles Grodin?*

Rose: Quirky, original, different.

Unger: *Dick Cavett?*

Rose: Important to a generation of people—someone who offered an alterna-

tive and I never quite understood what happened.

Unger: *Tom Snyder?*

Rose: A great broadcaster in the same way that Arthur Godfrey was a great broadcaster.

Unger: *Larry King?*

Rose: A great broadcaster. And also a man who deserves enormous credit, not for what happens on his broadcasts, but the interview itself. I don't think of him as a great interviewer. But I think of him as someone who works harder than anyone, maybe with the exception of Barbara Walters, at bringing the biggest guests to his forum. He's better at getting a guest on his show than he is anything else.

Unger: *Bill Moyers?*

Rose: Also an original. A man who showed that one vision on television could make a difference. He has an impressive body of work.

Unger: *Barbara Walters?*

Rose: Works hard, has been able to—and it's not easy, I can tell you because I've been there—has been able to provide America with an opportunity to see some of the most important people under her everywoman questions.

Unger: *Diane Sawyer?*

Rose: Artist. She has the best combination of intelligence and beauty on the air. And presence, too.

Unger: *Katie Couric?*

Rose: Katie Couric is the best of the morning show women in a long time.

Unger: *Women? Isn't that sexist?*

Rose: No, it's not sexist, but she's one of the best. She's one of the best. I think she and Bryant Gumbel were the best co-hosts ever on morning television, period.

Unger: *I was going to ask about Bryant Gumbel.*

Rose: Bryant Gumbel is the best interviewer. The three best interviewers in America: Bryant Gumbel, Ted Koppel and Ed Bradley.

Unger: *How about Charlie Rose?*

Rose: My mother told me not to talk about myself in such flattering terms.

Unger: *Let me quote to you descriptions of yourself. It's really a chance to define yourself by commenting on how others have defined you. Let me go through the list of things that have been said about you: "Charlie just sits down and talks to people like they came over for dinner and were talking over coffee."*

Rose: That's true. I hope that's true because the idea behind the program is that you simply pull the viewer close to the table.

Unger: *"Watching Charlie is like hanging out with your favorite uncle. He makes you feel comfortable."*

Rose: Part of my job is to engage the people, so that they feel comfortable, and they want to talk, and therefore they will be more revealing.

Unger: *"None of the customary butt-kissing."*

Rose: Don't do it. I don't have to do it, wouldn't do it and I'm offended by it.

Unger: *"The thinking woman's sex symbol. Shuns his social label of debonair friend of the rich and beauteous."*

Rose: I count among my friends people who are rich and beauteous, but that doesn't define me at all. My personal life is wide-ranging in terms of my curiosity. I hope I will be in Madison Square Garden tonight watching the Knicks. I will find myself at some point this week at a New

York dinner party at which there will be a number of interesting people. I will spend the weekend essentially alone without doing anything but working because I have work that needs to be done. But I have great respect for my friends across the board, whatever their economic or social standing.

Unger: *"Looks aside, he belongs on radio."*

Rose: People would say that because they think the program is essentially radio. I don't know what "looks aside" means.

Unger: *It means that if you include looks, TV is the place for you, but looks aside . . .*

Rose: Our show is about conversation, and you can hear great conversation on radio. And some say, you can hear it better. Don Hewitt was on our program recently, and he said that in television, the ear is more important than the eye.

Unger: *"The best interviewer on TV today."*

Rose: That's other people's judgment.

Unger: *"Rose does his homework. I've never seen a guest he couldn't make interesting."*

Rose: I fervently hope that's true.

Unger: *"Resonates beyond small ratings."*

Rose: I would like to believe that because that's why we're here. We do things that we think are interesting and important to do even though we know that they're not going to generate the same ratings that other kinds of more sensationalistic or more pop culture would provide.

Unger: *"Hair askew, he can look dog-tired even with makeup on."*

Rose: True, because I probably am dog-tired.

Unger: *"Surrogate for the viewer."*

Rose: Absolutely.

Unger: "Name dropper."

Rose: Perhaps, but not because I want to impress you, but because the name has some relevance to a story.

Unger: "Compared with everyone else on TV, he has substance, standards, decorum."

Rose: I would like to believe that's true about me, but I suspect it isn't. Other people have the same. I know you're saving your worst for the last. I know where you're going. Done this myself.

Unger: "Makes you feel that at least someone on TV has a brain."

Rose: There are a lot of people on TV who have brains. And they're not all on public television either. Koppel is a very bright guy.

Unger: "More at ease talking to Boutros Boutros Ghali than to any rock star."

Rose: Not necessarily. The genius of the show is that we're at ease talking to both, which makes the show.

Unger: "To Rose, a techno-geek from Microsoft is just as fascinating as a troubled country singer."

Rose: Yes. But both of them are interesting and both of them have a place on our program.

Unger: "A cross between an ex-Hollywood swashbuckler and a sleep-deprived Puritan."

Rose: Yes, yes. I don't know why they all talk about how I look. I don't know what that's about.

Unger: "His ability to ask precisely the right question triggers revelations."

Rose: I hope so. That's what it's about.

Unger: This is an interesting simile: "Looks like a high jumper in that instant of poised concentration before his first step toward the bar."

Rose: You know the amazing thing about

these quotes? I don't know half of them.

Unger: *Some of them are surprisingly well written. "Gives guests space to reveal themselves without being defined by someone else."*

Rose: Yes, I say to everyone I know as a principle of my life and their lives: Do not allow other people to define you. Do not! Insist on defining yourself.

Unger: *Okay, now we've got some negative ones.*

Rose: You can't do what I do and have everybody like every night on television.

Unger: "A fumbling journalist."

Rose: No, not fumbling, but the nature of live television is that it is not scripted and not precise. And the nature of doing it with a small staff we have every night is that it is not perfect.

Unger: "Guests wearily fuel his ongoing soliloquy."

Rose: Clearly not true.

Unger: "Endless questions and interruptions of answers."

Rose: Sometimes.

Unger: "Questions too long and redundant."

Rose: Sometimes.

Unger: "Giggles too much."

Rose: Rarely.

Unger: "Looks like he just rolled out of bed."

Rose: Sometimes.

Unger: "Almost every question includes a half-answer."

Rose: Too frequent, but there's a purpose in that which is to in a sense, give guidance to where you wanted to go. You know, it's like the difference in saying to you,

“What’s the best day you’ve every had?” and saying, “What’s the best day you had in New York this week?” Sometimes it’s important to give a question and get what you’re looking for.

Unger: *“The arrogance of a higher IQ than most of his guests.”*

Rose: [chuckles] I don’t know where you got this stuff. No, everybody always says that to me and I just think it’s not true. I’m less smart and less handsome than they write.

Unger: *“And that brings us appropriately to: phoney humility.”*

Rose: [laughter] No. Yes. Yes, no, yes, no, yes, no. I don’t know. I don’t think so, but . . . I don’t think about it, I really don’t think I have a higher IQ than most of my guests. If that’s phoney humility, so be it.

Unger: *And now something that Charlie Rose said: “We are a nightly window on the culture in its broadest sense.” Does that define your show?*

Rose: Yes. And I think most people respect us for that and come to us because of that.

© copyright 1997 Arthur Unger

During many years of covering television for *The Christian Science Monitor* Arthur Unger won national recognition as one of the medium’s most influential critics. He is also known for his revealing interviews with TV, theater and movie personalities. He is now preparing a book of memoirs and organizing his more than 1200 audio tapes for the Arthur Unger Collections at the Archive of Recorded Sound at Performing Arts Branch of The New York Public Library and the Broadcast Pioneers Archives at The University of Maryland at College Park, Md. All interviews, including this one, will be available for listening shortly.

Quote...

“I believe that television is going to be the test of the modern world and that in this new opportunity to see beyond the range of our vision we shall discover either a new and unbearable disturbance of the general peace or a saving radiance in the sky. We shall stand or fall by television, of that I am quite sure.”

—E.B. White, 1938

...Unquote

Entertaining the country and the world

Television production
and distribution.

Six major cable
networks. Newspaper
syndication and
merchandise
licensing.

The Hearst
Corporation's
Entertainment &
Syndication Group
is a major source of
entertainment
and information
services to the
country and
the world.

King Features
King of the comics and a
worldwide leader in
merchandise licensing



Hearst Entertainment

A leading producer and
distributor of television
movies, animation
and reality series
and specials



Lifetime
Television for Women
a NEW movie EVERY month



A&E and **H**
THE HISTORY CHANNEL

A&E, an entertainment network
featuring the original **BIOGRAPHY**,
mysteries and specials.

Experience the most definitive
moments in history through ground-
breaking original programming.
The History Channel:
Where the past comes alive.



ESPN **espn2**

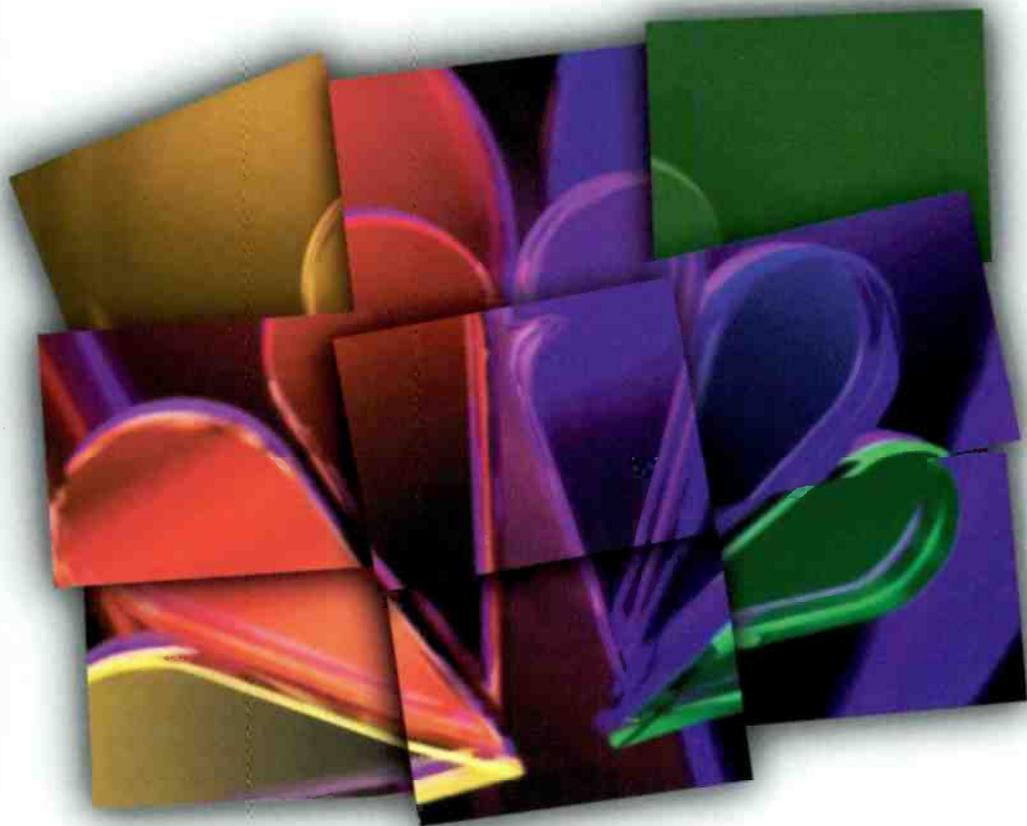


Hearst Entertainment & Syndication

A&E Television Networks is a joint venture of The Hearst Corporation, Capital Cities/ABC, Inc. and NBC. **BIOGRAPHY**® is a registered trademark of A&E. **LIFETIME ENTERTAINMENT SERVICES** is a joint venture of The Hearst Corporation, Capital Cities/ABC, Inc. **ESPN**® and **ESPN2**® are joint ventures between The Hearst Corporation and Capital Cities/ABC, Inc. **POPEYE** and **OLIVE OIL**

© 1994 Hearst Entertainment & Syndication Group

THE GOLDEN AGE



IT'S RIGHT HERE.
IT'S RIGHT NOW.
IT'S MUST SEE.



The Media Monopoly and Other Myths

On the national level there is going to be more competition, not less, say the authors of this study. Local media are the weak links in the media revolution.

By Eli M. Noam & Robert N. Freeman

It's been said that generals always fight the last war, not the new one. And the question is whether media critics sometimes do that, too. For many years, we were worried about the concentration of private power over the media. The fear was a media mogul with a political agenda: a William Randolph Hearst, who started a war and ran himself for Mayor, Governor, and President. And that was just using newspapers. Later, when television was controlled by three

networks, all within ten blocks of each other in Manhattan, the fear of control over hearts, minds, pocketbooks, and voting booths was amplified from the left and right. And today, with electronic media becoming smart, powerful, and pervasive, and with media mergers reported every week, the same fear is around more than ever, that in the end there will be only four media companies left in the world, and running the world, half of them owned by a guy named Rupert.

Ben Bagdikian expresses this fear in his article *The Media Monopoly*, published in *Television Quarterly* (Volume 28, Number 4). He pointed to the growing size of media mergers, the shrinking number of major media corporations, and their increasing diversification into multiple branches of media. He discounted the relevance of the diverse and publicly accessible Internet by pointing to the small share of Americans that have the equipment to get online. He also expressed frustration that the Telecommunications Act of 1996 has so far led to more cooperation than competition.

To evaluate all this, it is important to understand how the media world has evolved through stages. In the past of electronic media, twenty years ago, we had *limited* media, with only three networks, one phone company, and one computer company. Today, we are in the stage of multi-channel media, with many dozens of TV channels and with multiple phone networks. But this is still not the end of the story. The third stage, and the one we are entering now, is *cyber-media*. Cyber-text is already established. Cyber-audio is here. And cyber-telephony and cyber-video are emerging. In time, this will lead us to an entirely different system of mass media. Yet governments, media companies, and media critics are still looking backward to the good old days of scarcity.

The discussion over media concentration often has that anachronistic flavor. So let's first look at the facts. Yes, there have been lots of mergers. Some are troubling, some are not. Going beyond the specific deal, the more important question is, in the aggregate, have American media become more concentrated?

Despite the conventional wisdom, the answer is not an obvious "yes." First, while the fish in the pond have grown in size, the pond did grow, too, and faster. The growth of the information industry has been 8% faster than inflation since

1987. Second, all these separate ponds are becoming more of a large lake, as the technological and regulatory dikes between them fall.

The combined share of the top 10 companies in the US information industry declined from 59% in 1987 to 39% today. This is a totally different conclusion from those who claim that US media are now controlled by ten firms. In 1979, AT&T alone accounted for a full quarter of the entire media and information industry (*Table 1*). Today, even with two divestitures, AT&T is larger in dollar terms, but now commands only 7% of the total industry. IBM tripled in the past 15 years, but its share in the media and information industry dropped by one third, to less than 10%. CBS used to have 2%.

A decade later, even after mergers with Westinghouse and Infinity, the new company has only 1%. Bell Atlantic and Nynex both used to have about 3.5% each. A decade later, after their merger, their combined share is barely higher, at 4%. The major exception was Disney/CapCities/ABC, with a share that is now twice the combined share of these firms in 1979. But it's still only 2%. Also, both Microsoft and TCI grew from nothing to each capture 1% of the industry. But little of that growth was due to mergers.

When it comes to concentration, views are strong, talk is cheap, but numbers are scarce. Therefore, we have gotten our hands dirty by collecting the actual market share numbers, industry by industry, company by company, for 60 sub-industries from book publishing to film production to microprocessors, in order to trace the concentration trends over the past 15 years. We then aggregated these data into broader sectors such as telecommunications, video distribution, etc. And we aggregated those sectoral figures again into an overall industry concentration trend. This is probably the most detailed study ever of media concentration in America.

Share of Information Industry

Table 1

	1979	1987	1997
AT&T	24%	16%	7%
IBM	14%	17%	9%
CBS/ Westinghouse	2%	1%	1%
Bell Atlantic		3.2%	} 4%
Nynex		3.7%	
Disney	0.5%	1%	} 2%
ABC	0.2%	1%	
Microsoft	0.0%	0.1%	0.7%
TCI	0.0%	0.5%	0.7%

What did we find? Surprisingly, the overall concentration of the information industry did not increase, but declined somewhat in the past decade (Table 2).

To confirm this result, we used two separate measures of concentration: the combined share of the top four firms in each sector, and the Justice Department's HHI index, a more sensitive but less intuitive measure. An HHI under 1,000 means a market is unconcentrated, an HHI over 1,800 means a market is highly concentrated, between 1,000 and 1,800, a market is moderately concentrated.

If one looks at the classic mass media industries alone (excluding telecommunications, computers, software, and equipment) they did increase in concentration (Table 3), but remained unconcentrated by Justice Department standards. The main factors increasing these concentration figures were cable television systems (accounting for half) and home video (accounting for 20%).

The greatest drops occurred in telecommunications services, computers, TV programming, and music (Table 4). In long distance, AT&T's share dropped from 80% to just over half. Soon, new entrants into mobile and local telephony will gradually further that trend. In computers, the

market shifted away from mainframes to microcomputers, where no top firm controls much more than 10%. This shift also lowered entry barriers in the software market, which used to be vertically integrated with hardware, reducing the share of the top four firms to about one third. Concentration in TV programming dropped with the launch of new broadcast and cable networks. The share of the top four cable channel firms dropped from two thirds to about 40%. In pay cable, the share of Time Warner shrank slightly, but it still controls half the market. In music, the share of the top four labels dropped from 80% to 60%.

On the other hand, concentration increased in other industries (Table 5). Microsoft controls 90% of the microcomputer operating system market, for all the talk about platform independent Java. This is the Bill Gates problem.

There is also a cable issue. The share of the top four cable firms grew from one-fourth in 1979 to nearly two-thirds today. That's a lot of gatekeeping power, though they now must contend with satellite TV firms. Concentration also increased in TV station ownership and retail bookstores, and more than doubled in radio station ownership and book publishing. But the top four firms still have only about a quarter of these markets, as measured by revenue. In terms of stations, the largest radio firm has 102 stations, which sounds like a lot, but there are over 12,000 stations nationwide.

Total Information Sector Concentration

(weighted aggregates)

Table 2

	1986	1990	1995
Top 4 Firms	52%	49%	50%
HH Index	1839	1347	1262

Mass Media Sector Concentration

(weighted aggregates)

Table 3

	1986	1990	1995
Top 4 Firms	33%	27.5%	40%
HH Index	514	491	574

In other industries, concentration held relatively steady (*Table 6*). Film production remained fairly concentrated, with the top four firms controlling 60%. The movie theater, newspaper and magazine markets remained relatively unconcentrated, with the top four firms accounting for a quarter of sales.

Therefore, it cannot simply be said that US media have become, in general, more concentrated. Still, the next question then must be raised: even if a firm does not dominate any specific market, could it not be overpowering by being a medium sized firm in every market? The fear is that vertically integrated firms will dominate by having their tentacles in each pie. But in economic terms, this can only happen if a firm has real market power in at least one market, which it then extends and leverages into other markets. And such single-firm dominance of a market is becoming rare, as we have seen.

One exception is cable TV, where TCI and Time Warner can still favor their own channels over those of competitors. In New York, Time Warner could have shut out Murdoch's Fox News Channel, as a rival to its own CNN. This problem may disappear with satellite TV. The second important exception is Microsoft, which could extend its market power from computer operating systems to become the gate keeper of other cybermedia. If this control persists with no competitive relief,

Microsoft will become the major media policy headache of the 21st century.

But where markets are competitive, vertical integration makes little sense. Disney should not earmark its best programs for ABC if other networks offer more money. Conversely, for Disney to force its lemons on the ABC television network would only hurt the company. This creates major centrifugal forces inside the organization which in a competitive environment will lead to a breakup of the company. In a competitive environment, media firms must divest and focus for optimal efficiency. To attract viewers, content production will separate from distribution, and news writing will separate from political lobbying.

And what about all those famous synergies? These have been more asserted than shown. In announcing its mega-merger, Disney CEO Michael Eisner invoked the word not less than five times in four consecutive sentences, like a mantra. But most of those cross-promotional benefits—film, books, toys, etc.—could be established by simple contracts. You don't need \$15 billion mergers to create them.

Twenty years ago, CBS bought the New York Yankees baseball team and the big publisher Simon & Schuster, all to achieve those same vaunted synergies. Nothing came of it. Sony bought Columbia Pictures and Records, to merge film and music with consumer electronics, and lost billions on movies. Its share in music fell

Declining Concentration (4 firm shares)

Table 4

	1986	1990	1995
Telecom. Services	77%	76%	73%
Computer Hardware	56%	45%	45%
Computer Software	42%	39%	35%
3 Major TV Networks	70%	63%	53%
Basic Cable Channel Firms	67%	53%	39%
Pay Cable (Time Warner)	57%	57%	51%

Rising Concentration (4 firm shares)

Table 5

	1986*	1990	1995
Microcomputer Operating Systems	55% ³	85%	90%
Cable TV Distribution	37%	46%	60%
TV Stations	15%	16%	26%
Radio Stations	8%	9%	20%
Book Publishing	15%	30%	33%
Book Stores	20%	23%	26%

* The 1986 column actually contains Microsoft's 1984 market share.

from one-fourth to one-sixth. In Time Warner's case, the synergies became negative as the rap music business dragged down the respectability of the news magazines; today, the company is a collection of feuding fiefdoms. Disney, Viacom, and News Corp. will get there too, after their empire-building leaders have left the scene.

Although media companies have become more diversified, they can only exploit cross-ownership for so long as they retain market power in distribution. While the Telecommunications Act of 1996 led to an immediate spurt of media mergers, it also opened the door to competition between cable, wired, and both satellite-based and terrestrial wireless distribution systems. Such developments will not be as instantaneous as the media deals. But in time they will undermine the economic power and rationale for diversified media corporations.

Does this mean there is no concentration problem? No. But the real problems in media concentration are not national, but local. 98.5% of American cities have only one newspaper. (They rarely editorialize about that.) 98% of American homes

have no choice in their cable provider. Alternative local residential phone service may be coming, but is not here yet. Local radio concentration has increased considerably since the Telecommunications Act of 1996

relaxed local ownership ceilings, and is more of a problem than national radio concentration.

None of this is surprising. Local media are the weak link in the media revolution. Competing national media lead to narrowcasting. Programs are expensive, and must be produced for the world, not just for a town, in order to make money. Media companies must aggregate increasingly scarce eyeballs nationally and internationally. That's also true for cyber-media, which have been world-wide from the beginning. And local media are even more in trouble in the future. In cyber-television, advertising can be customized and targeted, and advertisers will migrate away from local newspapers as advertising vehicles.

But on the national level, to repeat, there will be more competition, more conduits, more content. With the number of channels increasing, smaller firms can enter. The Internet is rapidly becoming an important media outlet. In 1996, some-

Stable Concentration (4 firm shares)

Table 6

	1986	1990	1995
Film Production	62%	62%	61%
Cinemas	29%	29%	29%
Newspapers	25%	25%	26%
Magazines	23%	22%	22%

where between 9 million and 42 million US residents used the Internet, depending on whose estimate you believe. These estimates have been doubling annually. The current Internet is primarily a medium for text, graphics, and audio information. In the future, small firms will connect their video servers to such cyber-networks, and users will come to them. It will be more like in book publishing today, some big players and many small ones.

Does this solve all of our concerns? Not all of them. Diversity still does not assure openness. Competition can lead to exclusion of unpopular voices in order not to offend. Advertisers have more power.

Content becomes more sensationalized. In the past, common carriage was the bedrock of free speech in an environment of private carriers because it prevented a carrier from discriminating against any speaker or lawful speech. But now, the days of common carriage are numbered. Most importantly, the regulatory status of the Internet is up for grabs. And those are the issues we should focus on. ■

Eli M. Noam is Professor of Finance and Economics and Director, Columbia Institute for Tele-Information. Robert N. Freeman is Media Concentration Research Project Manager, Columbia Institute for Tele-information.

Quote...

News Bites Dog

"In the crucial period before the Nov. 5 elections, Bay Area television stations almost entirely ignored local, state and national politics... there were almost no stories from the TV news departments that sorted out the issues and gave viewers any hope of understanding the real story. Instead, the broadcast journalists on whom most people rely as their primary source of news were busy doing detailed reports on disaster, mayhem, crime, and animals. All the local stations spent a vast amount of time covering the fires in Los Angeles. KGO even aired a report on how fires affected the filming of *Bay Watch* (and yes, it included shots of Pamela Anderson in her swimsuit). KPIX ran an item about a farmer in Austria who yodels to his cow. KRON reported on a goose and a dog who became friends. "Hot stuff.

"Why is this happening? Why is one of the most intelligent, politically sophisticated media markets in the country getting such horrible television news?"

—*The San Francisco Bay Guardian*

...Unquote

How TV Sobered Up (But Is It Falling Off The Wagon?)

The changing image of alcohol use on the tube. That alcoholic St. Bernard dog, the Rat Pack and other lushes.

By Mary Ann Watson



The life of the party always had a drink in his hand. In the 1950s, alcohol was routinely presented on TV in a positive social fashion. Cocktails and highballs were the mark of a glamorous and sophisticated crowd. On the 1953 series *Topper*, for instance, George and Marian Kirby, the good-looking young ghosts who haunt their posh former home, now owned by Cosmo and Henrietta Topper, ran with a hard-drinking bunch before they were

killed by an avalanche on their fifth wedding anniversary. Even in death, the Kirbys' "zest for life" could not be quenched.

Their alcoholic St. Bernard dog, Neil, also perished in the accident. Scenes of the ethereal pooch sporting an ice bag on his head to relieve a hangover were a recurring gag.

The Playhouse 90 production of J.P. Miller's script *The Days of Wine and Roses* in 1958 was a notable exception to TV's



Alcohol as social lubricant:

ABC's *Bewitched* (1964-72), the lovable witch Samantha (Elizabeth Montgomery) would fix everyone a drink to lighten things up when her over-bearing Mom visited.

lighthearted view of spirits. The story of a young married couple and their drift into alcoholism—played with terrifying realism by Piper Laurie and Cliff Robertson—conveyed a different picture, one of damaged lives rather than carefree consumption.

But TV in the swinging sixties continued to define out any adverse effects of alcohol use. It was a seemingly required activity for successful young professionals. On *Bewitched*, for example, advertising executive Darrin Stephens was unlikely to get through a day without imbibing. If he was running dry on creative ideas, a martini would lubricate the brainstorming. If his overbearing mother-in-law was visiting when he returned home, his loving wife Samantha would fix everyone a drink to break the tension. When he and

his boss Larry Tate entertained clients, their glasses were continually freshened.

Countless situation comedy plots perpetuated the myth that drinking alcohol was an effective means of coping with everyday stress and that cold showers and drinking coffee could return a person to sobriety. Another falsehood the medium relayed was that a stock character, the town drunk, was a lovable and harmless member of the community.

Otis Campbell, who is well-acquainted with all the moonshiners in Mayberry, regards the jailhouse as his home away from home on *The Andy Griffith Show*. More of a town mascot than a menace, he would lock himself up and enjoy Aunt Bee's home cooking while he recuperated after a night of carousing. "Now I know I must be drunk," Otis says as he tries to

jump into the cell bed that had been propped up on its side. "I never fell onto the wall before!"

In 1965, *The Dean Martin Show* greatly bolstered the notion of drunkenness as a lark. The handsome host of the variety show had been the partner of comedian Jerry Lewis in the 1940s and 1950s, but in the early 1960s he became known as a member of the Rat Pack—a show biz drinking circle that included Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis, Jr., actor Peter Lawford, and comedian Joey Bishop. Booze was their bond.

Martin's TV persona was of a relaxed crooner, always a little looped and often downright sloshed. "Every time it rains, it rains bourbon from heaven," he'd sing. Hiccuping in his tuxedo, Dean Martin was the convivial dipsomaniac.

The unfortunate message of his extremely successful television show was that liquor enhances life. Those who drink were made out to be colorful and engaging characters. Disapprovers

were cast as self-righteous, out-of-date moralizers. The joy of being plastered was that one could escape the constraints and responsibilities of adult life.

"I got picked up the other night on the suspicion of drunk driving," Martin joked. "The cop asked me to walk a white line. I said, 'Not unless you put a net under it.'"

The fear and embarrassment alcoholics caused their families was comic fodder. "I had Thanksgiving dinner in bed," the tipsy host said. "I really didn't plan it that way. It was just that when I woke up, I was on the kitchen table."

The pervasive presence of alcohol on prime time did not wane as the 1970s began. Jokes about heavy drinking remained a staple of television entertainment. A young viewer learning about the grown-up world would logically infer that everybody drinks, it's fun to do, and nothing bad happens to you if you do it.

Kids expressing the desire to partake of alcohol was a common occurrence on situation comedies. "In five and a half years

I'll be able to drink," the teenaged daughter Barbara eagerly informs her mother on *One Day at Time*.

When Arnold, the little lead character in *Diff'rent Strokes*, is refused a drink of wine at the dinner table, he asks "Can I smell the cork?" Even if the adults in the stories reminded their children that a

person can be grown up without drinking, the presentation of alcohol as a forbidden fruit added to its allure.

Researchers studying adolescents were concerned about the depictions. "Television, it is clear," an expert in the field wrote, "serves as a defacto health educator in general and an alcohol educator



Dean Martin, Sammy Davis, Jr., and Frank Sinatra in 1965, the only known television performance of the Rat Pack. A scene from *The Rat Pack Captured*, part of the Museum of Television and Radio's ongoing TV preservation project with *Nick at Nite*.

in particular.”

A comedian named Foster Brooks joined the supporting cast of regulars on *The Dean Martin Show* in 1970. His stand-up routine consisted of him slurring through a number of jokes about his excessive drinking. In 1973, a new feature, the “Man of the Week Celebrity Roast,” appeared on the show and Brooks became one of several celebrities seated at the banquet dais tossing comic insults at the guest of honor. The segment was so popular that when the series ended in 1974, NBC ran the roasts as a series of occasional specials. The gags about alcohol abuse were a fixture of the concept.

“I look forward to being part of this glowing tribute,” Dean Martin said in 1977 to open the roast for actress Betty White. “And about 3:00 this afternoon I got started on my glow.” When Brooks stepped up to the podium he told the assembled, “It’s a thrill to sway before you tonight.” As he said of Betty White, “We go way back,” he fell over backwards and hit the floor.

The other celebrities included a few zingers for Dean Martin along with their remarks about Betty White. “He likes staying at the MGM Grand Hotel,” said actress Georgia Engel about the venue of the broadcast. “They have fourteen bars here and they’re all within staggering distance.”

Milton Berle complimented Martin’s appearance, “Your eyes are so shiny and bright. Drinking that Windex again?” Defending himself against the comic barbs, Martin explained, “Just because I have red eyes and a white face doesn’t mean I’m a drunk—I could be a rabbit!”

Drinking immoderately without serious consequences was a television convention. In real life, tragedy was too often the result. One such horror story occurred in 1980 and reverberated through the country.

In Fair Oaks, California, thirteen-year-old Cari Lightner was walking to a church carnival when a car swerved out of control and hit her. She was thrown 120 feet; less than an hour later she died of massive internal injuries. The driver, who fled the scene, was Clarence Busch, a forty-six-year-old man with a long record of arrests for intoxication. In fact, two days before he killed Cari he has been bailed out of jail on another hit-and-run drunk-driving charge.

The victim’s mother, Candy Lightner, was told by a police officer that it was unlikely Busch would spend any time behind bars for his crime because drunk driving was “just one of those things.” The night before her daughter’s funeral, the thirty-three-year-old real estate agent decided she would start an organization to change the system.

Lightner’s first step was to visit California governor Jerry Brown and try to persuade him to set up a task force on drunk driving, a social problem that was killing about 28,000 Americans every year. When the governor would not receive her, Lightner went to his office every day and soon a good deal of publicity was generated. Brown finally acted on her request.

The resulting organization, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, adopted an acronym—MADD—that reflected the mood of its members, many of whom had lost children in similar ways. The crusade targeted lenient laws and weak judicial response to the crime of drunk driving. Each success, such as the 1981 passage of a California law that imposed mandatory imprisonment of repeat offenders for up to four years, brought MADD more media attention. The group’s membership grew rapidly and spawned the formation of Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD). In 1983 a made-for-TV movie starring Mariette Hartley in an Emmy-nominated performance as Candy Lightner added to

the prominence of the cause.

By the mid-1980s, there was a measurable reduction in the annual number of drunk-driving fatalities and a detectable change in the way drinking was presented on television. The awareness provided by MADD served to deflate the humor in intoxication. More storylines highlighted the possible consequences of irresponsible behavior.

In a 1985 episode of *Mr. Belvedere*, for instance, the seventeen-year-old son Kevin signs a parent-youth contract that states if he drinks at a party he will not drive, but instead will phone his parents for a ride home. They, in turn, promise not to harp on him if that occurs. When Kevin gets drunk at the prom, both sides honor the contract. His father tells Kevin, "We're proud of you, pal—in a disappointed sort of way."

But when Kevin gets drunk again a few days later and needs a ride home, his father gets angry. The housekeeper, Mr. Belvedere, has a talk with the hungover teenager about his recent escapades. Kevin says that alcohol gives him courage.

"You were at the prom," Mr. Belvedere replies, "not the Russian front." The story concludes with the understanding that drinking should not be regarded as a manly rite of passage.

An initiative launched by the Harvard Alcohol Project in 1988 had a concrete impact on the portrayal of alcohol consumption on television. Spearheaded by Professor Jay Winsten of Harvard's School of Public Health, the mission of the project was to make the "designated driver" concept a cultural norm.

The lobbying effort with writers and producers resulted in many TV characters displaying more responsible attitudes about alcohol. "I don't think we should drive," said April Stevens of *Dallas* to her sister, "I'll call a cab."

On the show *Hunter* a waitress asks her customers, "Who gets the soda water?

You? Well, I guess somebody has to drive."

Producer Leonard Stern was one of those who made changes. "When I was producing *McMillan and Wife* sixteen years ago," he said in 1988, "I'd have Rock Hudson as McMillan come home and immediately swallow a couple of drinks to relax. Today, I probably wouldn't allow that to happen."

Variety reported that members of the production community were "more aware than ever before of the power of their TV programs to influence the way people behave."

Making "designated driver" a household phrase by the early 1990s "was no accident," it was reported in 1993, "but the result of hundreds of references to the dangers of drunken driving deliberately planted in *Roseanne*, *Cheers*, and other top shows through a collaboration between Hollywood and Harvard."

Instead of happy-go-lucky drunks, recovering alcoholics became familiar in prime time. On *The John Larroquette Show*, for example, lead character John Hemingway is introduced in the pilot episode as he addresses an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting: "Hi, my name is John and I'm an alcoholic. Tonight I start a new job. And folks I really, really, really have to make it work this time. Tonight may be the most important night of my life. And all I have to do is get through it without taking a drink."

By the mid-1990s, though, there was evidence in American popular culture of what *The New York Times* called "a fading drumbeat against drunken driving." A British comedy import, *Absolutely Fabulous*, aired on the cable network Comedy Central and developed a cult following. The lead characters were two aging party-girls employed in the fashion trade who like to drink.

American TV picked up on the relaxation of the antialcohol trend. "The climate of this country has been so heavy

for the last 10 years," said the producer of the CBS sitcom *High Society* in 1995. "We wanted to let some steam out of the pressure cooker." The lead character of his series, Ellie Walker, is an author of trashy novels and is frequently seen drinking or hungover, even passed out on a friend's dinner table. Ellie has blackouts at parties, and as for rehab, she "thinks 12-stepping is a country dance."

The creator of the comedy series *Cybill* called the title character's best friend Maryann a "joyful drunk." She guzzles martinis out of water bottles. Coincident with television's new willingness to show attractive women boldly hitting the bottle was a rise in alcohol abuse among white females between the ages of 18 and 29—the medium's prized demographic.

"Maryann drives but she's never been in a crash," pointed out Alyse Booth of the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse about the unrealistic depiction. She hasn't even thrown up."

As the number of drunk-driving deaths began to creep up again in 1996, so too had the number of TV characters who drank alcohol irresponsibly. Professor Winsten contended there was "a direct relationship between media coverage and drunk driving fatalities."

"There were two periods of unusually high media attention to drunk driving," Winsten explained. "The first was in 1983 and 1984 and it was largely the work of groups like MADD. The second was in 1989, '90, '91, and '92 with a hefty representation of the designated driver."

"During each high-media period," he continued, "alcohol-related traffic fatalities, correcting for vehicle miles driven, fell twice as rapidly as during the intervening low-media periods."

As the 1990s draw to a close, the picture of alcohol use and abuse on television continues to loosen. For every depiction of alcohol

as a harmful substance—such as the several-episode *Party of Five* storyline concerning Bailey's disintegrating life at home and college when his drinking gets out of control—there are many more representations of alcohol as an elixir.

The young and winsome coterie on *Friends* enjoys Jell-O shots at a party and everyone has a blast. When Rachel tries to get over Ross's involvement with another woman, she accepts a date with a different suitor and proceeds to get blotto. It's framed in the show as cute, not reprehensible, behavior. In one episode Rachel's reaction to her mother's embarrassing conduct at a wedding is to ask Monica, who has catered the affair, "There's more alcohol, right?"

On the *Drew Carey Show*, beer is the *raison d'être* to the lead character and his pals. They often reminisce about the alcohol-induced escapades of their glory days. On a recent episode of *INK*, Ted Danson's character, columnist Mike Logan, bonds with his ex-wife's new beau as the two men polish off a bottle of Scotch.

Drunk and silly, they have a great time together. Commenting in his topical monologue on the *Tonight Show*, Jay Leno is incredulous about a news item regarding a fraternity that has outlawed alcohol at its social functions. "Drinking is the only reason you have a fraternity," he jokes to the appreciative laughter of the audience.

After years and years of unconcern about portrayals of alcohol abuse, the television industry has been prodded into an acknowledgement of its dangers. A personal tragedy became a mother's crusade that could not be ignored. But now, with direct pressure easing, a relapse is evident in many network offerings that once again are suggesting a fun-loving personality can be found in a bottle. ■

Mary Ann Watson is a professor of Telecommunications and Film at Eastern Michigan University. This article is a modified excerpt from her new book, *Defining Visions: Television and the American Experience Since 1945*, soon to be released by Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Creeping Commercialism and Lost Weekends

A critique of the proposal to help solve public television's financial problems by taking advertising in weekend prime time. A distinguished veteran of public broadcasting says it's the wrong way to go. He believes there is a better way.

By Henry Morgenthau

Lawrence K. Grossman's *PTV Weekend* proposes a kind of privatized after hours club designed to move into public television premises when PBS closes down for the night on Friday at nine and Saturday at seven. Specifically, it would present eight hours of programming per week, with full commercials, when air time reverts to local stations for à la carte broadcasting.

Not a bad idea in itself. With Grossman in charge there could be some intriguing

results. This whole concept is nonetheless a serious cause for alarm. At a time when the very existence of public broadcasting is threatened by a combination of drastic cutbacks in traditional sources of funding on the one hand and creeping commercialism on the other, *PTV Weekend* adds momentum to a tide that is pulling in the wrong direction. Is Grossman luring public broadcasters and their supporters with a Mephistophelean kiss of death?

During his tenure as president of PBS,

Larry earned the respect of public broadcasters by upgrading the quality of its programs and bringing stability to an institution suffering from growing pains. By his very presence, Grossman, who had voluntarily departed the so-called real world as president of NBC News, helped provide public broadcasters with a new self image and an enhanced sense of the possible.

Grossman's *PTV Weekend* is molded on what he refers to as "Great Britain's highly-regarded Channel 4." He has gone to great lengths with surveys and other documentation to prove the validity of his comparison of the two services. However, fundamental differences in US and British traditions of private and public support of cultural institutions argue against his assumptions.

From the 1920s, when broadcasting, initially radio, established itself as a viable mass media, the course of its development in the two major English-speaking countries on either side of the Atlantic headed in opposite directions. In Britain, radio started out under the private auspices of the Marconi Company, but moved rapidly into the government owned and operated British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

In the United States, we have a mirror image of this pattern. Herbert Hoover, as the Secretary of Commerce, with the responsibility for regulating radio said, "It is inconceivable that we should allow so great a possibility for service to be drowned in advertising chatter." But as the "roaring 20s" advanced, radio took root in an environment where President Calvin Coolidge proclaimed "the chief business of the American people is business."

It seemed entirely appropriate that the moguls of radio should move in and take over television networks and stations along with the programs and talent which in many cases, but not all, made a successful transition to the visual medium. The networks and station owners staked out

their claim to the franchises assigned to them by the Federal Communications Commission which became "money machines" fueled with advertising dollars. Corporate-political pressure on the FCC conspired to endow the stations with *de facto* ownership of their frequency franchises. This is indeed contrary to the mandate spelled out in the Communications Act which empowers the FCC to grant licenses for a specified period of time and available to any and all seekers free of charge when a license transfer takes place.

Later on, the concept of reserving channels exclusively for non-commercial television was fought for and won, defeating the powerful opposition of commercial broadcasters. Through a sequence of events in reverse order from those in Britain, non-commercial television came about only after broadcasting as a profitable business was the accepted practice in the U.S.

Non-commercial television, from its birth to this day, has been striving to survive financially. Initially, there was no federal funding. Money came from state and local government, often funneled through educational institutions and non-profit private institutions and foundations. In addition, non-commercial stations became increasingly successful in gaining support from their audiences through on-the-air appeals (nagging).

The first major funding for public television came primarily from private sources. By far the biggest was the Ford Foundation, which channeled grants principally to a few stations that had demonstrated the best promise of establishing themselves as production centers. This led to an exchange of programs among the public stations and a very small degree of coordination of their distribution. But in these pioneering days there was nothing in the system of distribution or the quality of the

programs to attract the sponsorship of corporate America.

The advent of a national public television service came about as a result of a blueprint drawn up by the Carnegie Commission in 1965 leading to the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 that in turn enabled the creation of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). Since then, it has risen impressively to levels where it is taken seriously by its broadcasting peers and consumers.

But public television continues to be plagued by certain genetic flaws, the most pernicious being an inadequate system of financing. The Carnegie Commission had proposed an excise tax on TV receivers as a constant source of income. But the Public Broadcasting Act rejected this approach, instead providing for direct congressional appropriations subject to continual renewal. Though these appropriations have increased, even at a time when funding of the Endowments for the Arts and Humanities has been pared back almost to the point of extinction, it now represents only about 17% of the total public broadcasting budget.

The absence of advertising is the bedrock distinction between commercial and non-commercial broadcasting, written into law. The concept of corporate underwriting has emerged as an acceptable way of dealing with this prohibition. A substantial share of the public television funding does in fact come from United States industry, either through their foundations—notably Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller, from prof-

its respectively in steel, autos, and oil—or through direct corporate underwriting.

In the years before the strong mutual attractions between corporate America and public broadcasting, an atmosphere of high-minded resistance prevailed among the would-be beneficiaries. I can remember when I came to work at WGBH in Boston, two years after it went on the air, that Coke machines had been banished from the premises because they were tainted with the Coca Cola logo.

Later WGBH launched *Masterpiece Theater* for PBS with underwriting from the Mobil Oil Corporation. The only recognition of this generous subsidy championed

by its vice president for public relations, Herb Schmertz, was an on-screen credit reading simply “Mobil Corporation” in black and white. The special “O” in the company logo was vetoed. The voice-over stated starkly, “*Masterpiece Theater* is made possible by a grant from the Mobil Corporation.” These stalwart series of hand-me-down British productions remain a staple on the PBS menu, but they are now presented as “*Mobil-Masterpiece Theater*” complete with company logo and fully-spelled-out corporate acknowledgment.

The condition of chronic financial adversity has caused a number of respected figures, such as Larry Grossman, inside and out of public broadcasting to propose full-fledged advertising on some kind of a limited basis. The debate is on. At this point, a number of stations including those in Los Angeles, Miami, and Chicago are testing the limits

The absence of advertising is the bedrock distinction between commercial and non-commercial broadcasting. The concept of corporate underwriting has emerged as an acceptable way of dealing with this prohibition.

by carrying 30-second announcements, euphemistically labeled “enhanced” underwriting, which respect the FCC prohibition against pricing, comparative claims and sales pitches.

Chicago’s WTTW proposes relaxing some of these FCC restrictions to the point of making direct pitches to buy goods and services. On the other hand, about 170 public stations have signed a pledge explicitly rejecting 30-second underwriting spots, and PBS has maintained its limit of 15-second announcements on its network programs. Because Grossman’s record in broadcasting is so well known and universally respected, his ideas for partial commercialization of non-commercial television have attracted a lot of serious attention. In the public sector, it appears to have triggered bipartisan opposition for a variety of reasons.

Representative Billy Tauzin (R. La.), new chairman of the House telecommunications subcommittee, wants to “separate the concept of public broadcasting from commercial broadcasting. There’s too much of a mix in play right now.”

Representative Edward Markey, who as Tauzin’s Democrat predecessor, labeled the Grossman proposal “Mephistophelean” in a letter to FCC Chairman Reed Hundt, stating that public broadcasters “can sell their souls for commercial advertising, or they can reject creeping commercialism.”

Hundt himself, declaring that “there’s a bad idea born every minute,” states in no uncertain terms that the Grossman concept “should be rejected out of hand.” But the fact that Hundt has unfortunately announced his resignation from the FCC removes much of the impact of his blunt rhetoric.

Ervin Duggan, president of PBS, has prudently remained open minded on *PTV Weekend* awaiting the resolution of the debate among his member stations.

Perhaps the most important benefit gained from bringing the question of financing public broadcasting back to center stage is that it has accomplished just that. In moving contentiously toward a consensus, most of the powers-that-be seem to favor some kind of trust fund. Representative Tauzin wants commercial broadcasters to contribute to the fund in exchange for some relief from carrying public service programs and donating free time to political candidates.

This trade-off is similar to what was intended in Britain when the ITV network sponsored and initially underwrote Channel 4, with the intent that it would take over their obligations for public service programs. The resulting commercially sponsored programs have led to some ironic twists. Channel 4 did produce some splendid programs like *Tales of the City*, based on the writings of the San Francisco novelist, Armistead Maupin.

The initial series was subsequently a big hit on PBS’s *American Playhouse*. But a proposed sequel series was rejected by PBS with several excuses, though I suspect the real reason was a single, much publicized, prolonged gay kiss. Meanwhile, back in Britain, ITV felt it had been stabbed in the back

when much of Channel 4’s prime time programming was given over to American hit shows like ER.

Hundt and many others oppose the Tauzin trade-off. Instead they favor a trust fund financed by additional spectrum auctions and fees that would replace the present system of free rides, or what some



Public Television does not need commercials. To the contrary, there should be a roll back of the ongoing malignant creeping commercialism.

would call rip-offs. Money garnered in this way would partially or fully supplant the direct Congressional appropriations which have proved generally unsatisfactory.

Public television is already finding a variety of ways of benefiting from its own resources without resorting to on-the-air advertising. These include franchising and other spinoffs ranging from publications and videotape to toys. Finally there is the commercial potential of sub channels that will come available through assignment of additional spectrum for high definition television, and other possibilities opening up with the expansion of digital technology.

Back in 1991 a *Columbia Journalism Review* article addressed these issues with **amazing farsight and insight**:

In return for deregulation, commercial broadcasters, cable operators, and satellite distributors, who use the public airwaves . . . should pay a spectrum-use tax, a cable franchise fee, or at least a transfer tax on the sale of station licenses and cable franchises . . .

. . . A one or two percent spectrum and franchise tax on broadcast and cable revenues . . . will produce up to a billion dollars that could help public broadcasting . . .

It is time that the commercial broadcasters and cable operators stop getting a free ride at the public's expense . . . [U]nused spectrum frequencies should be auctioned off, with the proceeds going to help public television and radio . . .

The author of that article is Lawrence K. Grossman.

Bravo! This sounds like the old Larry Grossman we have come to love and admire. Perhaps somewhere down the road we shall think of *PTV Weekend* as Larry's Lost Weekend. Public television

does not need commercials. To the contrary, there should be a rollback of the ongoing malignant creeping commercialism. We should also think in terms of downsizing and eventual elimination of the inevitably politicized direct Congressional appropriations. In its wisdom, the Carnegie Commission stated its intention to "free [public television] to the highest degree from annual governmental budgeting and appropriations procedures."

I am hopeful that public broadcasting will soon achieve long term financial stability through the establishment of a trust fund financed by a fair share of the profits which the government is entitled to collect from the telecommunications industry. As an early trust fund advocate, I am encouraged that a broad and powerful consensus may soon demonstrate that this is an idea whose time has finally come. ■

Henry Morgenthau has enjoyed a long career in broadcasting-radio and television, commercial and public. For some twenty years at WGBH, Boston, he produced many documentaries and talk shows for PBS and its forerunner NET. His mini-series *South African Essay* won a Peabody and his *Prospects of Mankind* series, hosted by Eleanor Roosevelt, brought many world leaders to non-commercial television for the first time. Recently Morgenthau has turned to writing commentaries on the media and social history.

© 1997. All rights to the above article written for publication by *Television Quarterly* are reserved by the author.

The Weekend Idea

PTV Weekend plans to present a powerful eight hour-schedule of original, high quality programming on public TV stations every Friday and Saturday night. This new generation of outstanding national programs, produced specifically for public television, will be financed by revenue from the sale of advertising during limited time periods on public TV stations that become associated with *PTV Weekend*.

The very point of launching the *PTV Weekend* experiment is to enable public TV stations to carry exemplary programs that meet their own needs and priorities rather than those of program underwriters and funders. Thus, public TV's limited advertising would be clustered in natural breaks only, with no artificial program interruptions, using significantly less advertising time than is carried on commercial television stations.

Revenues from public TV's limited advertising experiment will pay for the production of vitally needed, fresh programs that will be consistent with the mission and character of public television. If successful, the *PTV Weekend* experiment will substantially enhance public TV's programming budgets, and help its associated stations earn the means to make the tough transition to the multi-channel, digital telecommunications age.

Like Britain's Channel 4, *PTV Weekend* will have no production staff or program facilities of its own. With guidance from its public TV station partners, a small group of *PTV Weekend* programmers will be responsible for commissioning and acquiring all of its programs from public TV's traditional production centers and from other quality producers throughout the world. To augment *PTV Weekend's* production budgets, many of the programs it commissions will be co-produced with other quality broadcasters, cable and satellite networks, and syndicators in this country and abroad.

The *PTV Weekend* goal is to earn a 2.5 to 3.0 rating for its two-nights-a-week weekend schedule, somewhat above the 2 rating that PBS now averages during prime time. With its fresh, high budget contemporary programming, accompanied by strong marketing and promotion, *PTV Weekend* will seek to attract a broad audience of adults to public TV stations, including a larger audience of young adult viewers than public TV has ever been able to reach before.

—From "Introducing *PTV Weekend*," a May, 1997, prospectus
by Lawrence K. Grossman

CBS



Keep your eye on us.

Everybody Leaves Mad

A pioneer broadcast journalist's very personal memoir of the places she worked, and some of the people who made a corporate address more than just numbers on a building.

By Marlene Sanders



Everybody leaves mad, from television news, that is. I've held that theory for many years but most of my friends wrote it off simply that I had left mad. Now, however, more anecdotal evidence has surfaced, and from none other than Walter Cronkite. In his autobiography, *A Reporter's Life*, published in late 1996, he writes that despite promises about his future role at CBS News after his retirement in 1981, "not once was I ever called in for a special news assignment... I felt that I had been driven from the temple... I was being treated by Sauter and his minions like a leper." (Van Gordon Sauter was the current news president.) In promoting his book, Cronkite elaborated on the NBC program *Dateline* on Dec. 3 and in followup print stories, like the one with the *Los Angeles Times* on Dec. 29th when he said he "was disappointed with my treatment. I did feel hurt about it... If I

had known I was going to be shut out of future contributions to CBS News, I would have stayed anchor.”

The management, under Sauter, and an apparently insecure successor anchor, Dan Rather, did not want the man for whom the word anchor was created, hanging around and raining on their parade. Still, one might question why someone like Cronkite, with a 19-year-long occupancy of the anchor chair, a man who was the symbol of the network’s then sterling news operation, and the standard-setter for the job, should feel any grievance at all. After all, he was 65 when he retired and leaving—according to his book—was his decision. He had been well paid, though not in the many millions that TV’s news stars now command, and he has so far held the record for longevity in the job. Douglas Edwards had reigned for 14 years, from 1948 to 1962, when Walter took over. And although Cronkite had an office at Black Rock, corporate headquarters on Sixth Avenue, and a seat on the CBS board, he said he hadn’t been in the new headquarters building in some time.

To stay with the image of buildings themselves for a moment, I want to put my cards on the table: I have never set foot inside CBS News at 524 West 57th St. since the day I left in 1987. In fact, I avoid the block. I am somewhat embarrassed to make this public, since it has meaning only to me. But at a small dinner party last year, in a conversation about the business with Ruth and Fred Friendly, I happened to mention my avoidance of the building. Fred, as all knowledgeable folks in the news field know, was Edward R. Murrow’s producer on *See It Now* as well as of other legendary news broadcasts, and was two years president of CBS News, leaving in 1966. He resigned on a matter of principle having to do with the network’s refusal to carry daytime Senate hearings on Vietnam, which would have required preempting regular programming. In later years he

created a PBS series of Seminars on Media and Society which are taped in rental studios around town. After I made my admission, Fred told me he hadn’t set foot inside the CBS News building either—not for 30 years, trumping my avoidance of a mere 9 years. This was not my first admission of my building boycott, but it was the first time I knew anyone else was doing the same thing!

Ruth Friendly, in mock horror, said to me, “I’m sorry you brought this up, because we have to tape at a studio in the CBS building next week and Fred is resisting going.” I learned later that they did indeed tape, and that in fact, they had taped there before. Fred apparently had a major case of building denial, understandable under the circumstances.

During the mass layoffs at CBS News in the Larry Tisch ownership period, around 500 people, many of them long-time employees, were let go. In 1985, ’86 and ’87 there were regular blood baths. Some of the people had worked there for 30 years, arduously climbing the ladder from secretarial or lowly production work to become writers and producers. It was during the period when people still thought that some jobs were for life.

One news writer, a long-time employee who had worked for both Cronkite and Rather, was deeply hurt when he was not invited to the party celebrating Rather’s 15th anniversary as anchor in March of 1996. Past news presidents and many former employees were there, and so was Larry Tisch, who had nearly totally dismembered the news organization, but my news writer friend had been ignored. It was as though he had never been there, had never existed, had never written those hundreds of newscasts. His job was gone, but like many, he still felt his identity and residual loyalty to the company where he had been for so many years. Anonymity may be the role for many in television news, but the need for acknowledgement

of one's contribution is as common to those behind the scenes as to those in front of the camera.

By the time I came to CBS News in 1978 I had already worked for four other news organizations. Before CBS, I only left mad from two of them. Two others come off quite well in my memory because I felt good about the work I did there, was well treated, and left voluntarily for better jobs.

I should add that my building avoidance position also extends to certain programs. I almost never contributed to the CBS *Evening News* so I do take a look at it from time to time. But *Sunday Morning* is another story. For the first seven years of its existence I did many lengthy pieces for that program. It was a pleasure to work on stories as varied as the center for Hansen's Disease (leprosy) in Louisiana to Betty Hutton's return to Broadway after years of working in the kitchen of a New England rectory.

When I decided to leave CBS News rather than work in radio full time—the choice offered me in 1987—I had just completed shooting a story on a special school in Florida and it had come out quite well. It was scheduled for air around the time I left, but I learned that the new executive producer of the show had ordered my voice and presence removed, and someone else narrated the piece when it aired. My obliteration from the story I had done angered me to the point that since my departure, I refuse to watch *Sunday Morning*, ever.

I'm sure the ratings have not been affected, but that's what it means to leave truly mad. My experience with the show had been so satisfying over the years, that this mean-spirited gesture was simply intolerable. We care about the work we do,

apparently out of proportion to what is sane.

Skeptics about my theory applying mainly to television have said to me when I have mentioned it in passing that anybody who works for any kind of organization leaves mad when things don't turn out quite the way they anticipated. Surely all those thousands of IBM employees left mad, and what about the downsized others of recent years? Yes, I'm sure they, too, were unhappy, but I believe we have a special set of circumstances that keep anger simmering a lot longer.

Much about television, its correspondents, anchors and some producers is highly publicized. Contracts are discussed in print and on shows about the media; sometimes even accurate salary amounts are revealed. Our faces appear daily in people's homes. The more public is one's professional life, the greater ego one develops. For years I was frequently recognized in public. That doesn't happen to the average IBM employee or a top print journalist. That face recognition always caused me slight embarrassment. The social value of one's work after all was not the reason for

Some who were good reporters ran afoul of the increasing need to be better looking and more charismatic than when good writing and reporting were the main qualifications. Others grew older.

being recognized. Ball players, politicians, and high profile criminals have the same experience. Journalism has nothing to do with that kind of fleeting celebrity.

My career burned bright from the mid-sixties until my departure from ABC in 1978. It ebbed and flowed, depending on whether the ever-shifting news executives liked one's work. Their casualty rate was high, and one's reputation could sink like a rock if some-

one else took over. There was often a mixture of confidence in oneself, and despair that things were somehow not going well.

After 14 years at ABC, I managed to slip out and over to CBS before the noose tightened around my neck. Roone Arledge had become president of ABC News and developed his own favorites. I had been appointed VP and Director of Documentaries by Bill Sheehan, who himself was displaced by Arledge. So it goes. Yes, I left mad, but unlike my nearly 10 years at CBS that were to follow, I didn't punish the ABC News building. I had had nearly 14 years of great stories to cover, personal advancement, and had done some ground breaking work on behalf of women during those years.

We leave mad because of hurt feelings, for being unappreciated for the long hours, the weekends and holidays worked, the constant disruption of our family lives, the dangerous assignments covered, for being consigned to oblivion—often for unspecified reasons. There is also a great sense of personal vulnerability. It is your face, your voice, your personal style exposed for all the world to see, and when you are rejected, it's for your entire being.

The great Edward R. Murrow, who was forced out of CBS News in 1961, said on his departure, according to the book *The Murrow Boys*, "You're only important around here as long as you're useful to them, and you will be for a time. And when they're finished, they'll throw you out without another thought."

I feel a touch of incredulity that people doing the jobs we used to do are making more money than we ever dreamed of, or that the work deserves, as well as a sneaking suspicion that some of my colleagues even back then had better deals than I, and were more favored if less deserving. There is a touch of paranoia as well as a petulant quality to all of this, a childishness that may be inevitable in the ranks of "talent,"

the designation given by our union, AFTRA, to those who appear on air. This raises the specter of show business, temperament, and oversized egos. We are not immune.

Some who were good reporters ran afoul of increasing need to be better looking and more charismatic than when good writing and reporting were the main qualifications. Others grew older. We feel some satisfaction, at least, that we covered news when entertainment values were not as much in the mix. And in truth, it was a good and interesting life.

We go on, we do other things after, in my case at least, a very long run. Walter Cronkite's was even longer. But I just want him to know, that I for one, understand how he feels. ■

This article originally appeared in *The Silurian News*, published by The Society of The Silurians, an organization of veteran New York City journalists. Currently, Marlene Sanders is teaching broadcast journalism at New York University. As a member of the *Television Quarterly* editorial board, she occasionally visits 111 West 57th Street.

They Called it Guerrilla Television

Few today find TV coverage of our quadrennial Presidential conventions compelling watching. In this excerpt from her new book Subject To Change: Guerrilla Television Revisted, Deirdre Boyle recalls how a group of video freaks in 1972 breathed new life into stodgy network convention coverage, transforming a predictable event into a lively revealing glimpse of America at the crossroads. With the approach of Convention 2000, she thinks it may be time to break all the rules and reinvent the medium once again.

By Deirdre Boyle

It was February 1972, and Michael Shamberg wanted to put into practice some of the theories about alternative video he had been formatting. The 28-year-old author of *Guerrilla Television* had worked as a journalist for newspapers in Chicago and done brief stints at *Time* and *Life*. He had been to the Chicago '68 Convention and knew his way around the political scene. He knew if a group of video freaks went to Miami and did a good job, they could get major recog-

nition because the networks would be there and the national press corps would be there. He named the group he was gathering to cover the upcoming Presidential Nominating Conventions *Top Value Television*, or TVTV.

TVTV was not alone in seeing the Conventions as an opportunity to sell itself. Anyone in America with something to sell came to Miami expecting to get a piece of the power and the money, especially network TV. Reporters had attended



TVTV in Miami during the 1972 Presidential Conventions

the first Convention in 1831. In 1926 Lee DeForest, broadcast pioneer and inventor, speculated that what television needed was a live event to draw attention, such as a national convention.

The networks later used the Conventions to introduce their innovations—coast-to-coast network broadcasting in 1952, Huntley-Brinkley in 1956, the crepie-peepie camera in 1960, then color. It was time for half-inch video to make its Convention debut.

Shamberg and Megan Williams moved to San Francisco and joined Allen Rucker and members of Ant Farm, an art-and-architecture group located in the Bay Area, to plot their coverage of the Miami Conventions. Combining the talents of the East and West coast video scenes, they set up a business and living commune in San Francisco six weeks before the July Democratic Convention and operated around the clock organizing and fund raising.

For the first tape, TVTV raised money from four cable systems: Teleprompter and Sterling Cable (later Manhattan Cable) contributed \$1000 each; Continental Cable in Ohio gave \$500; and Cypress

Communications pledged an unrecorded amount. Although the cable systems provided only 25% of the funding, the precedent of selling independent programming to cable stations was established. The agreement made with the cable systems was that the program would be completed within two weeks of the Convention; the systems then would own a copy of the tape and could decide whether to air it.

In the end, TVTV spent roughly \$16,000 to make the first hour-long documentary—which included tape, equipment, a trip to New York for final editing, transportation, living expenses, and the princely salary of \$50 a week for everyone. TVTV finally put their expenses on credit cards and came away mired in debt but covered with glory.

A few weeks before the Convention, TVTV rented a stucco house in a posh Miami suburb where their ad hoc production collective would live and work while covering both Conventions. Once the Democratic Convention began, activity sprawled from upstairs bedrooms where crews logged tapes, down into the living room—

an informal screening room and mission control center cluttered with Sony portapaks, tapes, wires, cables, newspapers, and large hand-lettered signs and assignment sheets—and out around the azalea-bordered pool.

TTVTV's first big coup was in securing press credentials for all its members, one of a hundred officially accredited non-network TV groups from around the world given access to the Conventions on a revolving basis. Security guards on the convention floor were hesitant accepting press credentials from this unconventional group of blue-jeaned, long-haired alternate media guerrillas, and they gave hollow assurances it was "nothing personal, you understand." TVTV just kept their cameras on, recording it all.

The crew believed their equipment would allow them to approach events more like participants. Compared with the beefy network cameramen—laden down with scuba-style backpacks and cumbersome television cameras, tethered to a soundman, a floor reporter and often a producer—a slim young woman holding a lightweight camera in her hands was considerably less threatening and much more flexible. This meant their finished tapes could emphasize informal, unstaged interactions between people, some of whom might not even be aware of their presence.

TVTV knew there was no way that they could compete with the networks, so their tape would be about "us trying to tape the Convention and have it make sense as tape." Their emphasis would be on the "feel of the events" and on "the social space that has been neglected, rejected and missing from media coverage to date"—in other words, on the reactions of real people involved, including themselves. Their work would resemble a video collage—not of hard-edged, well-cropped

images, but of "found art like snapshots, postcards, and sketches."

In the briefing instructions to the crews, recorded in the video underground's magazine *Radical Software*, they listed the following "Things to Tape":

Delegates: *Because we will not have unlimited access to the floor, we want to pick up on specific behind-the-lines Convention-related activity. If we can develop a rapport with delegates and hang out with them we can be there at the informal moments which the networks can't cover but which can give a better sense of the Convention than staged interviews.*

Pseudo-Events: *Anything which happens for the media will be overcovered by it. Yuppies, for example, will stage media events. Instead of taking them at face value we need to shoot behind-the-scenes and debunk them just as we would the straight media or straight culture. A lot of people are coming down here to get press attention. They will. By the time our edit appears people will be tired of hearing and seeing them. Moreover, demonstrations and press conferences tend to be didactic in that it's people telling you what to think. That makes slow, talky tape. Better to have spontaneous behavior which happens in process (as in hanging out with delegates) . . .*

TTVTV deployed its motley staff of 28 into crews, using five to seven cameras at a time; each crew followed a story, and by rotating, everyone got some time on the convention floor. Each morning assignments were given on the basis of the day's convention schedule, the UPI wire, and what people wanted to do. Taping had priority over everything. In an effort to get what the networks did not, TVTV taped everything from the construction of the convention floor to a guided

boat tour of Miami.

The convention floor was the world's largest TV studio, lit for TV with rows and rows of hard white spotlights and wired with 150 miles of electric cable. The networks dominated the conventions: CBS had a staff of 500; NBC and ABC had 450 each. It was a cliché to say the Conventions were conventions of media people and the stars were reporters, not politicians. The networks did a more expensive job than anyone; they spent about eight million dollars on the Democratic convention—Cronkite's glass box above the hall alone cost nearly \$100,000—while the Democratic candidates and the party spent a little less than three million.

"The Democratic race would boil down to a quick civil war, a running death-battle between the Old Guard on the Right and a gang of Young Strangers on the Left," gonzo journalist Hunter Thompson reported in *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72*. Less than a dozen of the 5,000 media sleuths accredited at the convention knew exactly what was happening at the time. The strategy employed by George McGovern's forces to secure the first ballot was so "Byzantine," according to Timothy Crouse, that not even Machiavelli could have handled it on TV. The networks failed miserably; while Cronkite told the nation of McGovern's defeat, his "boiler room" at the Doral Hotel cheered knowing victory was theirs. But TVTV never lost sight of the story, following the complex plot of delegate challenges, capturing the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat, political style. In short, they succeeded where their establishment "betters" failed. Machiavelli with a portapak.

Their hour-long documentary, *The World's Largest TV Studio*, concentrated on two key events at the convention, the California and Illinois delegate challenges. In both cases TVTV provided exclusive material, including fine portraits of California's

state representative Willie Brown and Billy Singer, the Chicago alderman who successfully challenged Mayor Daley.

The parliamentary question of the California challenge was explained by the networks as though it were Goedel's theorem, Renata Adler noted in *The New Yorker*. "Top Value Television," she continued, "did much better . . . in simply eavesdropping—if a reporter with video equipment can be said to eavesdrop on an explanation by a McGovern aide to several delegations."

TVTV showed Willie Brown instructing his followers on the South Carolina challenge, saying to vote for it, when Shirley MacLaine—a California delegate—interrupted to say she thought the whole trick was either to win big or lose big. Brown, who apparently had not meant to explain that subtlety even to his floor whips, ran through the strategy, noting they should look solid behind the challenge so as not to tip their hand to Senator Humphrey's forces.

Illinois had two delegations: one was led by Mayor Daley; the other was a "new politics" delegation led by Chicago alderman Billy Singer and Reverend Jesse Jackson. The convention had to decide which delegation was "official." Most expected a 50-50 compromise, but in an upset, the "rebel" delegation was voted in over Daley's "regulars."

TVTV covered the contest right up to the moment when Billy Singer walked down a hallway, into the credentials office, and took possession of the documents, stuffing them into a brown paper bag while smiling at the cheers of colleagues who had crowded into the small room. As *Chicago Sun-Times* writer Anthony Monahan later wrote, "the scene has the disorganized ring of reality, a contrast to the often-manipulated dramatics of network convention coverage."

In addition to focusing on the political players, TVTV followed the network media covering the Convention. They interviewed NBC's Cassie Mackin, the first woman floor reporter for the networks, who glowingly admitted, "It's a piece of cake. There's nothing a woman couldn't have done a long time ago." Dan Rather confided Conventions made him feel like a kid turned loose in a candy store. And Walter Cronkite proclaimed, "I enjoy an open-ended broadcast. It gives you a chance to say a few things."

In a mirror-within-mirror moment, TVTV explored the media's response to themselves by including a *Newsweek* reporter interviewing them, followed by a voice-over reading of the unflattering results of that interview. The seriousness of the TVTV group was apparently lost on the reporter who stressed their reliance on laughing gas for achieving a new perspective on the convention.

TVTV's new perspective owed less to laughing gas than to a satirical grasp of political absurdities, a true-believer's faith in the possibilities of a new medium, and a remarkable ability for being in all the right places at all the right times. TVTV owed far more to the Marx Brothers than Karl Marx in their understanding of how to tell a political story. The nitty-gritty account of McGovern's brilliant if questionable strategy to win the nomination is sandwiched between TVTV's witty approach to what was happening outside as well as inside the Convention hall.

The tape opens with an off-key rendition of "Moon over Miami" sung by TVTV member Frank Cavestani, the first in a series of funky, TVTV-signature style elements. Group members pop up at odd moments throughout the tape: a hairy Allen Rucker complains "I'm sick of being a media junkie", Videofreex Nancy Cain—wrapped in a towel—poses beside a life-sized poster of Colonel Sanders propped against the TVTV media van; and Michael

Shamberg zooms around like the Roadrunner cartoon character, muttering "Eagleton, Eagleton" while interviewing delegates in the back corridors of the Convention hall. The tape closes with sardonic snapshots of Miami, including close-ups of a palm tree, a plug for the beef stew at Wolfie's restaurant and several hilarious man-on-the-street interviews. The last word is had by a souvenir hunter amid the debris of the convention floor, who asks, incredulous: "How could anyone really vote for Nixon?!"

In the end, TVTV had 80 hours of tape and two weeks to edit their sprawling coverage. They flew to New York, checked into the Chelsea Hotel, and began the final edit at The Egg Store. They edited from half-inch tape onto one-inch using Sony equipment. The idea was to edit by committee, and it was, in Megan Williams' words, "pretty experimental and grueling." Parry Teasdale, a Videofreex, handled most of the technical matters. They worked in 24-hour shifts, then crashed in the studio for five hours until someone would come and wake them.

Their biggest problem, aside from the limits imposed by state-of-the-art video editing technology—a primitive system of crash edits developed before the era of electronic editing made everything precise and easy—was in finding a way to organize the material. The group knew they did not want voice-overs and cutaways. They edited what worked without stopping to think why, borrowing more upon twenty years of watching television—especially commercials—than on any knowledge of film or documentaries.

Shamberg shrewdly calculated that the critical audience for the tape might be five or ten key people who wrote for influential publications. Low on money and worried about their prospects for raising any to make the next convention tape, they arranged a screen-

ing in New York. Attending were several critics, including *New York Times*' TV critic John J. O'Connor, who devoted an entire column to *The World's Largest Television Studio* the day it was cablecast in New York. Although he was not entirely enthusiastic, criticizing it for "that peculiar brand of smugness that infects many underground visions of on-the-ground society," he nonetheless judged it "distinctive and valuable." The mere fact of a *New York Times*' review gave the tape and TVTV the kind of credibility they desperately needed.

O'Connor wasn't the only critic to find TVTV's coverage to his liking. Richard Reeves, writing later for *New York* magazine noted: "(TVTV) does exactly what CBS and NBC with all their millions didn't do enough of: TVTV reports more than it interviews; it shows the confusion on the floor as delegates look for telephone and hand signals from George McGovern's manipulators; it shows what the networks only tried to talk about. The film(sic) ... is an uneven and flawed little masterpiece ... the best electronic coverage of the Democratic Convention that I've seen. And I've seen too much." Renata Adler in *The New Yorker*, agreed with Reeves that TVTV had done a better job than the networks.

Lord Clipp © 1972



TVTV video guerrilla vs. network cameraman at 1972 nominating convention

TVTV's program on the Democrats' often chaotic "open convention" was rough even by their own standards. Though praised by veteran analysts for their fresh reporting style and astute grasp of the real stories at the Convention, TVTV knew they could do a better job their second time out.

Thrilled with their sudden prestige among the press corps, TVTV returned to Miami in August to cover the Republican Convention. They quickly discovered the Republi-

cans were as controlled as the Democrats disorganized. This made their job much easier, especially since the media inadvertently had been handed the Republicans' minute-by-minute script of the Convention, including all the "spontaneous demonstrations" held by the Young Republicans. The story at the Republican Convention was not about a fight for the nomination—since Nixon's anointing was a foregone conclusion—but about the clash of styles and values espoused by the people inside the Convention hall and those outside.

TVTV covered Young Republican rallies, cocktail parties, anti-war demonstrations, and the "scheduled" frenzy of the convention floor. Once again aiming their

cameras away from the podium and into the crowd, TVTV produced an amazingly coherent and exhaustive chronicle of the Convention. From the Nixonettes to the Vietnam Vets, from the ego-driven media stars to the power-hungry political czars, the characters included in *Four More Years* provided a complex portrait of America poised at a moment when a contentious war was about to end and a political debacle about to unfold. Without perhaps intending to, TVTV was recording the untidy demise of the Sixties and the complacent rise of the Seventies.

Four More Years leads off with a devastatingly funny portrait of Nixon's Young Republican supporters. An enthusiastic organizer commented to her staff, "The balloons alone will give us the fun we need!" prompting one TVTV member to observe later, with mingled awe and delight: "No one can write lines like that! They'd never believe you."

By contrast the extended interviews conducted by Maureen Orth with the Nixon daughters, Julie Eisenhower and Tricia Cox, reveal them to be surprisingly articulate. Whether their campaign arguments were persuasive or not, their ability to handle themselves under a barrage of tough questioning was admirable; that they appear as such in the tape counteracted any charge of bias in TVTV's handling of the Republicans. Well-known political figures including then-governor Ronald Reagan are seen entering and leaving private parties as well as in more public appearances.

Maureen Orth's brief interview with Henry Kissinger emerging from a party was particularly startling. Orth asked the chief U.S. peace negotiator whether there was any sign of peace. Nixon, whose campaign slogan was "Peace is at hand," might have been surprised at Kissinger's declaration that "we" didn't care what effect the peace process was having on domestic politics.

Orth's follow-up question, asked just as Kissinger was about to escape into his limo, was "How are the girls?" Surprised, the suddenly smirking Kissinger replied, "Very nice. Very nice," clearly caught off guard by the attractive Orth's fast thinking.

The network stars play a much greater role in this tape than in the previous one. Adopted by avuncular reporters who enjoyed the sudden attention paid to them by these young and talented upstarts, TVTV was able to explore the range and variety of personalities and opinions displayed by the network biggies. Several provided helpful tips such as NBC's Douglas Kiker explaining the merits of washing with vinegar rather than soap and water after being gassed. By the second Convention, Cassie Macken had lost some of her enthusiasm, confiding she was bored by the lack of spontaneity and exhausted from all the "busy work." Gradually a family portrait of an ego-driven press corps emerged.

Caught are some of the internecine jealousies between competing journalists: Mike Wallace grumbles that Dan Rather is over with the VIPs while he is stuck on the floor where nothing much is happening, concluding: "I'd rather be watching this at home." And in a lengthy and thoughtful interview, Walter Cronkite comments on the dangers of too much introspection for journalists and voices his worries about people who rely exclusively on television for the news.

Only Roger Mudd refuses to talk to TVTV's camera. Baffled by Mudd's muteness, interviewer Skip Blumberg asked Nancy Cain, who was taping, if she believes he was just tired. Then, in a typical TVTV moment, Blumberg whips out a harmonica and plays "The Republican Convention Drag" as the TVTV logo appears in the screen's lower right-hand corner. Using graphics, wit, and charm, TVTV playfully turned broadcasting convention—and personalities—inside

out and upside down.

The lingering issue of the Vietnam War and its protest, an issue which lay beneath the carnival surface of the Convention—and at times erupting—was woven throughout TVTV's tour de force work. The real threat of violence—with its potential to unseat Nixon—came from the only antiwar group with any “psychic leverage,” the Vietnam Veterans against the War. Just as TVTV scored at the Democratic Convention with its insider's grasp of the California challenge, so TVTV scored at the Republican Convention with its eye-witness coverage of the “Last Patrol.”

TVTV arrived early and taped an informal conversation among three women standing around the veterans' compound, discussing the VVAW and whether there would be violence; one woman in pointy Gary Larson sunglasses insisted, “They're aimless creatures,” convinced they were all just pretending they had been in Vietnam.

At 4 o'clock, as the Vietnam Veterans Against the War marched up Collins Avenue, most of the press was either at the Convention Hall covering the liberal vs. conservative floor-fight over rules for 1976 or else standing around in the mid-afternoon heat waiting for Nixon to arrive at the Miami International Airport. The “Last Patrol” was led by three men in wheelchairs, and it moved up Collins Avenue in dead silence; 1200 men dressed in battle fatigues, helmets, and combat boots followed orders given by “platoon leaders” using hand signals. For the first time during the convention, the police were clearly intimidated.

Suddenly and unexpectedly, Congressman Pete McCloskey shoved his way through the police line. He talked with a few vets long enough to convince them a frontal assault on the hotel would be futile. Few cameras were there to catch

the drama, but TVTV's portable video rigs were trained on the scene as outright conflict was narrowly averted. The only one who made himself understood above the chopper drone was a paraplegic ex-Marine Sergeant named Ron Kovic. Unfortunately, the vets' silent march and sober speeches were obscured by the media's focus elsewhere on the street hijinks of prankster protesters.

As the delegates began arriving for the final evening session, gas billowed down the avenue, cries arose from blocks away, and formerly peaceful police grew rougher. The delegates, after inhaling gas and Mace, came hawking and retching into the Hall, frightened and angry. One delegate interviewed by TVTV recommended firing on the demonstrators, adding enthusiastically: “We might end up with something larger than Kent State, but it would be worth it!”

During the final session what was happening in the streets was hardly acknowledged by the convention celebrants. Inside the Hall were the realities of the Seventies—Richard Nixon exulting in a warmth binge—while outside was the last gasp of the Sixties. As girl scouts and boy scouts dashed through the police barricades and into the hall, marching around the floor and singing “The Star Spangled Banner,” protesters behind the fence sounded a different note with their dissonant rendering of the national anthem.

Ron Kovic addressed the Convention that night, but not from the podium. TVTV had followed Kovic throughout the convention. On the last night Hudson Marquez gave Kovic his TVTV press pass so that he could get onto the Convention floor. What happened then became part of the moving climax of *Four More Years* as Kovic mournfully stared into TVTV's camera, surrounded by security guards and a few network reporters. Yelling into the crowd of cheering Nixon supporters, his voice nearly drowned by the throng,

Kovic shouted: "Stop the bombing ... Stop the war. Stop killing human beings!"

TVTV boldly cross-cut Kovic's gravely heroic image with the manic frenzy of screaming conventioners, focusing on Henry Kissinger, politely applauding the renomination of Richard Nixon in the company of a pint-sized child clone as a shower of balloons rained down on the assembled zealots and a skinny kid, hysterically laughing, shrieked until he became hoarse, "Four More Years! Four More Years!"

TVTV enthusiastically continued to give interviews to visiting journalists throughout the convention. Timothy Crouse dropped in one afternoon in August and interviewed Shamberg, who, as self-appointed group spokesperson, explained TVTV's belief in a different style of television:

The networks have never understood that the expensive equipment they have dictates a style, which is what's pissing people off. They have to force behavior. When they're on live, or even when they're filming, they have to have something happening when the cameras on. Everything they do costs so much that they can't afford to be patient. That's why they have correspondents who are always talking to give you the illusion that something's happening. They can't wait and really pick up on what's happening...

The network people are essentially giving people a radio with a screen. If you turn the picture off, you don't miss a thing. They never let you hear environmental sounds. They always make people express themselves in a format determined by the announcer.

TVTV's notion of just hanging out and letting things happen rather than structuring interviews to conform to the packaged reports favored by broadcast news yielded a style that was, for journalists like Crouse, strikingly different. The mere fact

that narration was absent was cause for comment: "Except for a few handwritten titles," Crouse remarked, in his *The Boys on The Bus*, "the pictures and sounds of the Conventions spoke entirely for themselves; watching a narratorless news broadcast was a strangely exhausting and disturbing experience. There was no easy out of what was happening on the screen."

Although proponents of American-style cinema vérité had introduced narratorless documentaries to television in the early Sixties, the style had never become acceptable to broadcasters accustomed to the voiceover narrators or on-camera journalists who conferred credibility along with neat conclusions to their stories. TVTV's approach was actually more open, more "objective" than the networks' coverage. "Surprisingly, they reflected no particular ideology," Crouse added; for *Time*-dropout Michael Shamberg, there was perhaps no greater praise for TVTV's journalistic integrity than such bewildered admissions.

After *Four More Years* was cablecast, TVTV was approached by someone from the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company, who said if they would cut the two tapes into a 90-minute version, he would broadcast it. He paid them \$4,000—which helped pay their debt—and transferred their program to two-inch quad tape, which was then standard gauge for broadcast transmissions. As far as TVTV knew, it was the first time half-inch portable video tape was bumped up to broadcast standard. The convention tapes were broadcast the end of October on Westinghouse's five TV stations.

Charles E. Downie of the *San Francisco Sunday Chronicle and Examiner* waxed enthusiastic about the show in his television column:

Did you ever suspect that the almost antiseptic view of the Republican and Democratic conventions presented by the Big Three networks did not convey the full flavor of

either? . . . You're tired of politics? Can't imagine any coverage of the two conventions that would be worth lighting the tube for? You're wrong. You may not like what you see on "Conventions '72" but you should find it fascinating—all one and a half hours of it.

T VTV had set out to prove alternate media could be more than disjointed, herky-jerky images of confrontations or out-of-focus eroticism—and they had succeeded. As one columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported: "These kids, crawling around with their hand cameras, did such a fantastic job that in New York, a top CBS exec called a meeting of his convention staff to grump 'Our network spent more on coffee than these kids did to cover both conventions. They did a better job.'" T VTV's achievement reportedly spurred the networks to accelerate their development of small, light-weight electronic news gathering (ENG) equipment, which would give them the mobility and unobtrusiveness T VTV had displayed so well.



Guerrilla television theory asserted that if the people had cameras, they could change the world, but access to cameras was not enough. Once consumer video became small and relatively inexpensive, video became a staple of middle-class life. The new miniature camcorders were marketed as the latest electronic toys, status symbols of consumer power and economic privilege.

Understandably, there was nothing in the ad copy about the potential for this new technology to overturn the economic, political, and cultural realities that most camcorder purchasers were struggling to maintain. Instead, video recorders were marketed as the latest version of Super 8 or the Polaroid camera, an electronic version of home movies and the snapshot,

a medium for nostalgia, sentiment, and private memories, but not for public discourse.

Guerrilla television's influences were quickly absorbed and transformed by commercial media into something anti-theoretical to its original intentions. One can see a perversion of guerrilla television today in prime time network shows like *America's Funniest Home Videos* and *Cops*, examples of what is now familiarly referred to as "reality TV." This disturbing trend, which began in the late '70s with programs like *Real People* and *That's Incredible!* borrowed heavily on guerrilla television style.

Even more disturbing are programs like *America's Funniest Home Videos*, which encourage people to use small-format video equipment not to change the world but to humiliate themselves and their friends, families, and pets for the amusement of mass audiences and the economic advantage of program producers. Guerrilla television's discovery that ordinary people are fascinating subjects for television programming was twisted into the exploitation of "ordinary people" on cheap shows that appeal to sadomasochistic audience interests. So-called reality TV is a long way from guerrilla television, from the dream of democratizing the media by giving ordinary people a voice of their own and access to the air. ■

Deirdre Boyle is a media critic, historian, and curator and the author of numerous essays and books, including *Video Classics* and *Video Preservation: Securing the Future of the Past*. She is senior faculty in the graduate media studies program at the New School for Social Research. This essay is adapted from her new book, *Subject to Change: Guerrilla Television Revisited* recently published by Oxford University Press.

©Deirdre Boyle 1997.

Conscience of the Industry

In television's early days, as NBC's chief censor, Stockton Helffrich set high standards for responsibility in programming and honesty in commercials

By Bert Briller

Stockton Helffrich, who was NBC's top censor in television's pioneering years and who left to head the National Association of Broadcasters Television Code office, was in many ways the conscience of the industry. Knowing that I had covered his work as a reporter and critic on *Variety* and that as executive editor of the Television Information Office I'd worked with him, the *Quarterly's* editor asked me to do a piece on Stockton's contributions. When I telephoned, Maxie, Stockton's wife of 51 years, gave me the sad news that he had died a few weeks earlier, in February. He was 85.

This is not an obituary, but an appreciation of the man, his changing attitudes and the influence he had on television standards.

He usually denied he was a censor. Rather, he said, he was an umpire. Perhaps "coach" would be more accurate. "I try not to say No, but How," he said, "to tell script writers how something that should be

stricken out could be said."

A case in point is Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. The play deals with incest, prostitution and other themes that were taboo for television in the early Fifties. With Stockton's guidance, subtle changes were made to suggest the seamy relationships without offending the straight-laced.

I reviewed the telecast for *Variety*. It opened revealing the usual trappings of a television studio, the characters wandering among the cameras and sound booms seeking a writer to solve their conflicts. It was extremely moving, without bringing protests from the puritanical or losing some of the playwright's darker intimations.

In the conflict between free expression and social responsibility, Stockton's approach was to be positive and proactive, rather than negative and censorious. He pushed for the elimination of racial stereotypes (he barred showing the black child Farina in *Our Gang* comedies turning white with fears). NBC, like CBS and ABC,

replaced the word "darkies" in Stephen Foster's *Old Folks at Home*, despite objections from some critics that an American classic was being censored.

Stockton pushed for the inclusion of minority actors in the whole range of roles. One such bit of color-blind casting was Leontyne Price in the title role of *Tosca*, traditionally played by a white singer. Another was the casting of a black singer in a traditionally white part in Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. NBC's policy was termed "Integration Without Identification."

Helffrich was a descendant of the Richard Stockton who was governor of New Jersey and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. After graduation from Penn State, in 1933 he joined NBC as a page. (Many who went on to positions of influence in the industry came to the network as pages.) Soon he was tagged as "the guide with tact." That led him to the script department in 1934, and eventually to an important executive position.

As head of Continuity Acceptance, Radio and Television (CART) he built a department which at times had three dozen editors working in the six cities where NBC programs originated. To keep their standards uniform he circulated monthly reports with the acronym CART. When one of these memos called for



Stockton Helffrich, 1962

reducing the mayhem in westerns, a trade paper chided him, "Aren't you putting the CART before the horse?"

His CART memos were deftly and delightfully written. Occasionally they might contain an off-color joke which had been cut from a Hollywood script, printed to alert the New York editors that they might find the comic's writers trying to sneak it in on the east coast.

The monthly report, originally intended just for NBC's editors and management, soon became a much-sought-after bulletin in the industry. Being on its limited

mailing list was a sign of prestige. CART report exploration of issues, controversies and editing questions gave it an unexpectedly broad influence that extended even to the creative production centers across the country.

Back in October 1950, I did a piece for *Variety* on public criticism of television for "excessive décolletage." In those days of live television, Stockton requested that actresses and female guests bring along an alternate (and less revealing) gown and he had extra scarves available in the studios. But "beefcake" as well as "cheesecake" drew fire. My article reported that NBC had received five phone calls from viewers objecting to a male ballet dancer's shapely tights.

One mother protested that it was “shocking to my daughters.” Stockton’s comment in CART was that the tights “in terms of contour revealed were strictly average. Either the kids involved or the mother must be in need of a good lesson in anatomy.”

When decisions were problematic, Stockton sometimes checked audience attitudes. Should the word “bastards” (in the Fifties ordinarily a TV no-no) be cut from Shakespeare’s *Richard III*? Groups such as a Connecticut PTA were polled, and Shakespeare was not bowdlerized.

An important part of his job was defending his *not* using the blue-pencil. In 1955 *Born Yesterday* came under fire. Adapted from the play and film in which Judy Holliday played the floozie who left a wealthy junkman for a man who taught her to think politically, it was targeted by some groups as “immoral.” Stockton answered that in fact it was highly moral, that the characters were facing adult problems and reaching for moral and ethical standards. He pointed out that a newspaper critic praised it for “daring—for TV—frankness.”

When television tries for something beyond blandness, Stockton noted, “The occasional straw in the wind looks to those with an axe to grind like a target for immediate and violent chopping.”

“We approach our so-called censorship or editing tasks with a point of view in touch with the times,” he wrote, “and with the courage of our convictions. . . . It seems to us wiser to take a calculated risk, and measure audience reaction to it now and then, than to stand sluggishly still. As a matter of fact, if our ear to the ground is as sensitive as it should be, essentially it isn’t even a calculated risk the broadcaster takes,

but rather a fulfilling of a maturing public’s demand.”

On the subject of violence he wrote that while mayhem is allowed, it should be limited in degree. “We get letters that our westerns are wishy-washy,” he complained. “In this business you’re damned if you do and damned if you don’t.”

While violence is reduced in degree, he declared, “we do not go so far as to suggest that conflict never spills over into violence. Conflict so definitely does exist all around us, that it seems unrealistic in the extreme to suggest we allow no reflection of it within reasonable bounds.”

Perhaps essential aspects of Stockton’s policy were moderation and avoidance of moral indignation; he told a university conference on broadcast self-regulation, “a pinch of the salt of common sense is imperative.” He sometimes referred to his job as “Common Sense-orship.”

“We concern ourselves with too glib a use of cocktails and alcohol as props for brittle drawing-room comedies, but we would scarcely argue that character-delineating uses of alcohol should be eliminated from a television adaptation of *The Lost Weekend*.”

He carefully oversaw the handling of mental and emotional illness, with an understanding that earned him several awards from the American Mental Health Association. In the early Fifties a comedy series was proposed which would have opened each week with a shot of the grounds of an asylum, the dolly camera picking up a variety of allegedly insane

“Some of the pressures [from special interest groups] constitute very real threats to the ability of radio and television to challenge and hold audience.”

characters. Needless to say, Continuity Acceptance found this completely unacceptable.

The subject of suicide required careful editing. Stockton's CART report for July 1957 said, "The only intelligent approach script editors could take favors avoiding, to the degree the plot makes it possible, those handlings which would give morbid viewers encouragement to be self-destructive." Because John O'Hara's *Appointment in Samarra* is a fine piece of art, its suicidal motif was permitted, though it was "aired with our fingers crossed."

An important touchstone of Stockton's was "grownup art includes the ugly, and is critical."

Stockton also moved against the extreme slapstick treatment of adults, such as parents and teachers. In Robert Young's series *Father Knows Best*, the guideline evolved was that Dad is not infallible, "But neither is he a first-class boob," Stockton said. "The family situations show humor and entertainment, but at the same time they show adults with human fallibilities working themselves out of their difficulties with realistic and intelligent solutions."

To assure responsible treatment of some problem areas (such as foster parents, black markets in babies and adoptions) Stockton encouraged NBC to effect relationships with and get input from the Child Welfare League, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Medical Association, and other groups.

Because then, as now, commercials brought a substantial number of viewer complaints, Stockton spent a good deal of time checking story boards and finished spots. Lunching with him one day I was startled to hear him order a double

martini. The reason, he explained, was that he had turned down a campaign for a headache remedy, and the client announced that it was taking the \$2,000,000 budget to another network.

At issue was whether there was clinical proof for the claim that the remedy was better than a competitor's product. The test cited had been performed on women who had postpartum depression. NBC and its medical advisors reasoned that the test on the new mothers should not be extrapolated to headaches in general. The decision cost NBC the business. Ironically, later the FTC required the advertiser to run corrective spots.

Stockton was an early "truth in advertising" advocate. I recall an article I wrote on the clash between two refrigerator giants. One claimed that it had the least expensive 17-cubic-foot fridge. That was literally true, but misleading, because the competitor had an 18-cubic-foot model that cost less. NBC insisted on having the misleading copy revised, a stand Stockton felt was not only in the consumer's interest but also helped sponsors' credibility and advertising generally.

Stockton's courage was demonstrated in 1946 when he publicly joined the Radio Guild of the United Office and Professional Workers of America. In an industry where actors, engineers, technicians, writers and directors were in unions and guilds, office workers were beginning to organize. Stockton stated the

case for the union, part of the Council of Industrial Organizations (CIO), as the lead story in its newspaper, *White Collar Mike*.

Pointing out that he personally had not been mistreated by the largest of the networks, and in fact had a "page boy to glory" career, Stockton declared that since his return from overseas (he had been a

An important touchstone
of Stockton's was
"grownup art includes the
ugly, and is critical."

Navy lieutenant in the South Pacific during World War II), he felt the need for a union.

"NBC's executives are remiss in their handling of employee problems, even though the blame in all instances cannot be indiscriminately placed on management . . . Management simply cannot hope to encompass the minute details of employees' woes. The employees themselves by democratic process must pitch in and do their share," he wrote.

Some of the grievances related to the rehiring of employees who had left for armed service during the war and their feeling when they returned that posts they could fill were going to less qualified people.

While some staffers applauded Stockton's statement, others objected, sometimes nastily. Although office workers at CBS and WMCA voted for the union, NBC and Mutual employees rejected it.

Stockton paid careful attention to comments by television critics, not only in the national press but in local newspapers. He surveyed viewer mail and often told his staff that even though there is only one letter of complaint on a subject, that letter often represents the sentiments of several less articulate viewers.

He told me he asks three questions about every complaint: Could we have predicted trouble on this score? What did we do wrong? Do we agree with the viewer that we did do wrong? If the editors feel that something was wrong, an apology is sent, he added. If, on the other hand, the staff's feeling is that the complaint is unreasonable, a polite but firm letter explaining the network's point of view is sent.

One such squawk came after a widow on a dramatic show said "Please omit flow-

ers." The florists association protested that the comment would hurt their business, but Stockton's department replied that the gripe was unwarranted.

One mother wrote in objecting to a reference by Dr. Frances Horwich on the acclaimed *Ding Dong School* series for young children. The mother complained that the educator mentioned that a goldfish in the bowl was pregnant. In those days (before Lucy had Ricky Jr.) "pregnant" was a questionable word on television. Stockton, after reviewing the kinescope recording, replied that in the context it was perfectly acceptable.

Stockton left NBC in 1960 to establish the National Association of Broadcasters Code Authority headquarters in New York. As a departing gift, NBC gave him a complete file of his CART reports, handsomely bound in three volumes.

The Code Authority was a self-regulatory body set up in 1952 by networks and stations under the NAB's aegis. It exercised more weight in the commercial area than on programming, but its guidelines and bulletins covered a broad range of areas of concern. Obviously, it condemned profanity, obscenity, smut and vulgarity. Stressing their special responsibilities toward children, it admonished broadcasters to treat sex and violence without emphasis and to be specially sensitive to subjects such as kidnapping or crimes involving children.

Operating within the framework of the Code, the networks and station groups each maintained their own policies and editors. The Code offices served as a kind of clearing house of standards and editing practices. But in 1982, a few years after Stockton retired, the Code was outlawed by a Federal judge as violating the Sher-

"I came to the conclusion myself at the end of my career that even a little bit of censorship is bad."

man Anti-Trust Act because the broadcasters allegedly were acting in concert to limit commercial time.

Stockton's career was summed up by his successor at NBC, Carl Watson: "He was a man who made a tremendous contribution to broadcasting, helping to increase its awareness of its great responsibility."

Despite the increasing prevalence of bad taste and mayhem on the air, Stockton's attitude toward censorship became less approving over the years. Two years ago when I was working on a *Television Quarterly* article about media violence, I asked Stockton whether he would favor a rebirth of the Code. He said he would not. Aside from the difficulty of getting the various sectors of the industry, and the courts, to agree on such a step, he felt philosophically that there should be less censorship.

He expressed that point of view in an interview with Jeff Kisseloff for his recent book *The Box: An Oral History of Television 1920-1961*. Stockton recollected that he used to argue with the American Civil Liberties Union, stressing his need to weed out offensive material. The ACLU, he recalled, argued that television censors should obsolesce and eventually cease to exist. "As time went on," he said, "I began to find my own views broadening, and I came to the conclusion myself at the end of my career that even a little bit of censorship is bad."

Some readers occasionally twitted Stockton that an issue of CART reports was too sober and lacked "juicy tidbits." He defended the need for seriousness: "Many of the pressures [directed at television] are deadly serious, deadly sober, and they have to be met in a serious and sober fashion. Some of them constitute very real threats to the ability of radio and television to challenge and hold audience."

Those serious threats persist today. The thoughtfulness and principles of Stockton Helffrich can serve as guides to those who provide leadership in the struggle to

balance free expression with responsible programming.

A few years ago Stockton sent me a book of his poetry. One of his favorite poems was *The Methuselah Caper*. Some of its couplets include:

*Age doesn't dim alacrity:
I somehow drub calamity.
I shrug off troubles touch and go
Assured that Spring succeeds each snow. . . .*

*Still, just in case they'd snuff my spark
I'd best keep whistling in the dark. ■*

Bert Briller was a vice president of ABC Television and executive editor of the Television Information Office. Earlier he had been a reporter and critic on *Variety* and worked at WNEW and WOR-Mutual.

The *Message* is the Message

Is there too much High Definition hype for hardware, technology for technology's sake? A call for more focus on content and programs that say something.

By Christopher Lukas

Some months ago I wrote to the *New York Times*, expressing dismay that one of their editorials had hailed digital High Definition Television with its unrivaled clarity of image as an artistic millennium for America. "Ridiculous," I thought, and offered the newspaper's editors some thoughts on what might be more important to concentrate upon: "We should focus not on sharpness of image but on sharpness of insight. We should celebrate the message . . . the tones in our writing."

To my surprise, the letter was published and received a great deal of positive attention from friends and colleagues. This article is the outcome of some of that attention. In it, I make some personal comments about what would make television better in the 21st century.

I want to concentrate on the underlying matter of television, not the technical perfection of its image. It is there that I see the need for continued vigilance, not in the hardware.

My premise is simple: you can have good television without fancy special post-production effects, wraparound sound, or HDT. You cannot have good television unless the program says something.

I am not against technology. I cruise the Web, drive a modern car, prefer jet planes to Cessnas. I like MTV's fast-paced cutting and snappy gimmicks, and lots of devices that allow us to get our message shot and edited with greater clarity and impact, or delivered faster. After all, who would want to spend fourteen hours on an old-fashioned editing table when a non-linear machine will do it in two?

What I don't like is technology which gets in the way of content, or technology for technology's sake (the "Insta-cam" on the freeway or the those 11 P.M. local news remote "standups," when there's really nothing to see; the use of wipes to get from one banal scene to another; the sequence of fast cuts when the story line is what should be concentrated on).

When color cameras first appeared, I

was producing for WNDT (later, WNET), the public station in New York City. The word came down that in order to justify our purchase and “attract an audience” we had to do everything in color, even if the project didn’t warrant it.

At the time, I was particularly fond of film noir movies, and I couldn’t understand why everything had to be in flat washed-out colors when black and white actually suited some projects better. Not only flat but tilting toward the green, since the GE cameras the station had purchased second-hand, from CBS, I think had a particular hue that gave new meaning to the term, “sickly cast.” With a striking white backlight and stark background, my *Romeo & Juliet* scenes were striking. The same material, set against a blue (green) eye and with green highlights on the actors’ faces was a vapid disappointment.

Then there was the flip side: at about the same time, 1/2-inch portapak had also just arrived, and I remember arguing for the use of this technology because it allowed artists and journalists to get out on the street and make pictures and sound that captured neighborhoods in a new way.

Our engineers were against it. First, the images wouldn’t be in color; second, they wouldn’t be up to FCC specs. No one seemed worried about the stories we were trying to tell. After a long hard fight, we finally won the right to get our street footage transferred through Time Base Correctors to 2”, and on to the home screen. (There’s an example of technology being absolutely appropriate and necessary: without TBCs, we would have been lost.)

Leap forward with me to the introduction of Hi-8 cameras only a few years ago, the perfect instrument to catch the instant moment; to shoot where large crews and equipment were not wanted. But how many broadcast engineers and

managers didn’t want Hi-8 on their air because the images were too grainy! Those few who did use Hi-8 were ahead of the game financially and were able to capture images that can be matched in flexibility and transport only with the introduction of today’s low-weight digital gear. And I’ve encountered broadcasters and managers who won’t sanction that, either, because it’s not “broadcast quality.” I don’t know about that: I’m the proud possessor of one of Sony’s little darlings, and I’ve been shooting a documentary on a New York Philharmonic cellist; my colleagues look at the image and think it’s BetaSP.

I repeat: I’m not against technology. I just want it to match its firing power with the target and the project. To make High Definition Television a priority is to put not only the cart before the horse, but the medium before the message. Why are we always so passionate about clarity of image? It’s clarity of *thought* that we need! I think McLuhan was dead wrong: the medium isn’t the message; the *message* is the message!

It was “Technology, 10-audience, 5” when the multitude of cable channels, another TV “miracle,” actually got to our homes. You remember what was promised: The media were hyping this as the triumph that would give us a wonderful new mix of programming, with something spectacular for everyone. But it’s no secret that the millennium did not arrive with cable. We had a slight broadening of the spectrum; some admirable niche programming. But we also had a lot of junk, and a lot of repeats.

Who has not found himself or herself flipping relentlessly from one challenge to the next and wishing for better not more; for piercing, startling creativity, not another chance to see something that was run elsewhere five years ago—or ten—or twenty. Among the collection of cable channels being pushed for the future, there are some that seem promising—

among them, The Story Channel, Ovation, even the Therapy Channel and the Recovery Network; but there are some that make my heart sink—The Outlet Mall Network and Jock Talk TV among them.

Why, along with a desire for sharp images, do we have a passion for more, when we should be concentrating on deeper?

So what do I want on that home screen? What are these deep messages I think we're missing out on? My focus is mainly on non-news programming: documentaries, talk shows, dramas, cultural programs. There have been many perceptive critiques of network and local news, I don't need to take on that task. Besides, I've always believed that the audience should get its information about the world from cultural shows, not just news programming.

First of all, I am not a dinosaur, nor a PBS freak: I have nothing against rock music, I'm not a news junkie, and I don't spend my whole evening glued to *Nature*. (In fact, by now, I'm bored to death with running cheetahs, and The Three Tenors; with Perry Como and Lawrence Welk reruns.)

My father resisted getting a television set until 1954, when I was 19. None of my friends had TV either, so there was no *Kukla & Fran* for me, no *Mr. Wizard* no *Howdy Doody*.

But in 1954, Joseph Welch and the Army faced off against Senator Joseph McCarthy, and my lawyer-father couldn't resist the pull of it all. The hearings were live. Dad's first TV experience was mine as well, and I saw television defined as that

multi-camera setup in the U.S. Senate hearing room where the Wisconsin despot faced off against the brilliant, good-natured legal beagle. Who can forget Welch's line, "Have you, at long last, no shame, Senator?" after McCarthy scurrilously attacked a young lawyer attached to Welch's staff? It was drama of the highest order: good against evil, American values against totalitarian ones.

I came away from watching with awe for the, yes, technological capability that allowed us to sit in our living-room and participate in this national morality play. I remember thinking how powerful the potential was for this medium, of which, up until then, I had not known.

It would be another four years before I had my first television job in Hollywood, but the excitement of being able to eavesdrop on crucial reality sowed some of the seeds of my career as it did for

many young people. Perhaps there were other shows which matched the depth and excitement of those hearings, but the only other TV I watched in those early days was Ernie Kovacs. Home from college, I would join my father in that late night television relaxation—for the fun of it, for company, just to have the set on—but the stuff that stayed with me involved deeper matter.

Erik Barnouw, in his classic history of the documentary film, makes a good case for the fact that the best documentary films never make it to TV (of course, many were made before television). The "On the one hand, this, on the other, that" over-balanced TV mentality has a deterrent effect, since many of the best docs, were—and are—based on a single individual's

When awards time comes along the writer often gets put at the end of the line, behind a lot of other people. I wonder where all these wonderful thoughts and words come from that actors and directors so often take credit for?

point of view. That notion—of the documentary as a statement of someone's point of view—has all but disappeared in the ethos of journalistic "objectivity," and with it something wonderful has been lost.

Most early documentarians were not journalists or filmmakers. That helps. Pare Lorentz (*The River, The Plow That Broke the Plains*) was a music critic. Robert Flaherty (*Nanook: Louisiana Story*) was a businessman. Frederick Wiseman began as a lawyer. These men—and the women that followed—were educated about the world. They had ideas, and they translated these ideas into films. Television is not very hospitable to strong, independent ideas in its documentaries.

Exceptions? Of course. It has become a cliché to remember *Harvest of Shame*. We often talk about it even now, almost forty years later, with awe and amazement; its revelations about the lives of migrant workers in the United States were powerful to make us feel ashamed of ourselves.

Recently, I looked at it again, and was startled to see that the shooting and editing of the film were rudimentary. Few close-ups, some jump cutting, mediocre sound, black and white images. The huge radio-style microphones held up to interviewees' mouths almost obscured their faces. Clarity of image be damned! The film taught us something and moved our souls.

And others that came later: Bill Moyers' work. Fred Wiseman's early films. Ken Burns, when he exercises some restraint. The POV series on PBS. But few great documentaries are funded by, or made for, the home screen, though in the aftermath, some get there.

For instance: Peter Watkin's *Battle of Culloden*, the first and best "docudrama," which was aired on both British and American television, though his *War Games* did not; too controversial. George Stoney's films that were made for the *Challenge for Change* program of the Canadian Film

Board, notably *You Are On Indian Land*. And in recent times, Michael Moore's *Roger and Me*.

But think of *Night and Fog, Sorrow and the Pity, Harlan County, USA*, and dozens of other strong point-of-view films: These are generally not funded by television organizations. Too strong. Too "one-sided." Or that ugly phrase, "journalistically irresponsible." But why? Why shouldn't that kind of filmmaking be a regular feature on our home screens? Not the only programming, but much more of it. And then let the audience judge for itself.

Television is a medium that sells product. Without income, no network can survive. This income may come from commercials, subscriber fees, or (for PBS), from corporate, foundation, or governmental cash. The temptation to trim controversial or difficult story lines in order to increase sales is inescapable, which is why only the most clever and persistent individuals manage to raise enough cash to produce power and meaningful shows. This is true in commercial, cable, and public television. Of course, niche programming has proven that small audiences can be important, but the fact is that the numbers game is the only game in town for most operators, and that goes for PBS, too.

So why ask for controversial and powerful content in television fare? If selling is the name of the game, why want anything more? Two reasons: One, because it's good for America; two, because it's possible.

I watched *Play of the Week, Playhouse 90, Studio One* in the 1950s. Somewhat later, *The Defenders*. What I remember about them is that they were about something. Entertaining, yes. Big stars? Oh, my, yes. Tough-minded subject matter? That, too. *The Defenders*, Herbert Brodtkin and Buzz Berger's New York-based show about a father-son lawyer team presaged many

later TV offerings, such as *New York Law and The Practice*, but at the time it was very gutsy and different from anything we'd had: a weekly show that took on subject matter and took points of view at a time when few TV documentaries, much less regular series, dared to do so.

What else did a lot of us watch back in the '50s and '60s? Well, *Omnibus*, the 90-minute Sunday evening series that ran on network television against all odds. What charmed everyone about this program were its wonderful cultural offerings, affording a wide TV audience views of the best music, drama, literature, and personalities that America had to offer, long before public television took that on, then dropped it, as its mandate.

Not all of my favorite television programming has been controversial or counter-cultural. I remember the Tony Awards, which that extraordinary husband-wife team, Alex Cohen and Hildy Parks, produced for so many years for commercial TV. Hildy's solo writing of these thirty or so shows, which emanated from the stage of one New York Theater or another, always managed to introduce serious matter to go along with the entertainment. They utilized popular Broadway shows to educate, uplift, and still get an audience.

Writing is at the heart of story-telling. And without ideas, there is no writing; without writers there is no good television. This is true of every genre, even event coverage.

I always think about this when awards time comes along, because the writer often gets put at the end of the line, behind a lot of other people. In the 35 years I've been

in this business, I've seen producers and directors and actors get most of the credit for what happens on the screen. I wonder where all those wonderful thoughts and words came from that actors and directors so often take credit for?

Everything I think worth viewing isn't in the past. Despite the disappearance of most serious playwrights from our TV screen, and the reduction of music to the close-up of an oboe on *Live from Lincoln Center* (which I find as unedifying as the close-up of an amoeba when no pertinent information or compelling story line accompanies it), and the over-abundance of confessionals and game shows, there

has been some wonderful material on in recent years, some of it untimely ripped from the air.

My So-Called Life, for instance, which for its brief existence gave young and old a gripping, if painful, look at what it means to be an adolescent, and offered perhaps the most honest and compelling view of what it's like to

be a gay person growing up in mainstream America; this series had superior acting, joyfully careful writing, and subject matter that didn't skirt any of the real life problems.

Then there's *N.Y.P.D. Blue*, a modern detective series which uses its gloss on technology (the "shaky cam") to increase its sense of being in the here and now, but which puts story line first. Not heroics, but down-and-dirty deals, brutality; how people get by, whether they're on the side of good or of evil.

And what about *The Practice*, which had one of its programs attacking cigarettes with a boldness never before seen on television? No public TV show would have

I'm not against technology. I just want it to match its firing power with target and the project. To make High Definition Television a priority is to put the medium before the message.

dared such an attack, and no television documentary either. Here the message came first. The message drove the show.

In our times, more technology is the byword of progress instead of more clarity and more ideas. Most young people entering television are graduates of communications' schools or have a degree in film or video rather than in literature or political science or mathematics, or history.

These are trouble signs.

The lack of content-driven television mirrors that trouble.

I would like to see the writer back in the driver's seat. I would like to see well-crafted drama on television again. I would like to see thoughtful people create thoughtful and exciting works that get behind the surface; deep in our souls, but not simply to shock us or damage our self-image; rather, to reveal and uplift

and, yes, edify. And where can we find the models for these? If we can't devise them from our own knowledge, perhaps we can do what all great cultures do: learn from the past. ■

Christopher Lukas's career has included assignments as Director of Programming for WNET, New York and Executive Producer for KQED, San Francisco. He has also directed and produced documentaries on a variety of subjects for public and cable TV. Recent projects were *Hazelden's Miracles*, a video on the drug rehabilitation center, and *Whose Death is it, Anyway?* a PBS special on end-of-life decision making.

Survey

The Local News Score

The *Rocky Mountain Media Watch* conducted its third annual content analysis of 100 local station television newscasts from 55 markets in 35 states on Wednesday, February 26, 1997. According to this monitoring organization, their study "reveals an eerie sameness to programs and a constellation of excess.

- Crime and violence dominate most newscasts.
- Triviality and celebrity dwarf wisdom and substance.
- Many important issues receive scant coverage.
- Some stations air more commercials than news.
- Gender and ethnic diversity is limited in the news.

"This nightly diet of mayhem and fluff has serious toxic effects in our culture. We call upon TV journalists to break these lazy and manipulative habits. The time for change is long overdue."

—Paul Klite, Robert A. Bardwell, Jason Salzman, *Rocky Mountain Media Watch*.

The First Amendment Closeup: A Program Devoted Exclusively to Free Speech Issues

By Jack Isenhour and Sandra Dickerson

She was America's darling, a TV star from the age of two, the picture-perfect child of glamorous, superstar parents. Each week to the strains of "I've Got You Babe," the blond-haired charmer was carted onstage for the finale of the hit television show *The Sonny and Cher Comedy Hour*. In the early '70s, Chastity Bono was the most famous preschooler in America. And thanks to that fame, whatever happened to Chastity Bono from then on

was news.

The 1990 headline said it all: "CHER SHATTERED AS DAUGHTER CHASTITY TELLS HER: I'M GAY." Twenty-year-old Chastity Bono had been outed by a tabloid newspaper.

"Being outed was the most destructive, terrifying thing anyone could imagine," Bono told an interviewer years later. "I panicked. We all panicked."

There was no question that Bono's outing in the *Star* tabloid was an invasion

of privacy. The issue was whether freedom of the press—the right to report the news—should override an individual’s right to be left alone. That was the issue that Chastity Bono and two fellow panelists argued early last year on *Freedom Speaks*, the weekly talk show devoted to discussion of such First Amendment issues as freedom of the press, freedom of speech and freedom of religion.

Program moderator Kerry Brock, Director of Broadcasting at the Freedom Forum Media Studies Center in New York, describes the show’s format as “*Nightline* meets David Brinkley.” Like *Nightline*, each *Freedom Speaks* episode begins with a cover story designed to stimulate discussion. “Outing” featured a story on House Speaker Newt Gingrich’s sister Candace, an outspoken lesbian advocate, and like *This Week with David Brinkley*, a lively panel discussion is the heart of the program.

“Outing is immoral and does not serve the community,” Bono told Brock and fellow panelists Gabriel Rotello, the pro-outing editor of *Outweek* magazine, and Garrett Glaser, an entertainment reporter with KNBC News.

Glaser wondered if outing were simply an attempt by the media to raise profits and ratings.

Rotello countered that, if the information is newsworthy gays should not be immune when it comes to reporting about sex lives. “The press has the responsibility

to apply the same standards to homosexuals and heterosexuals,” he said. In the end, the panel seemed to agree that outing is more an ethical than a legal issue.

This is the kind of debate heard every week on *Freedom Speaks*, now syndicated to over 100 PBS stations nationwide. The program was created by Kerry Brock and her staff at the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University. Their goal was to educate the public about the First Amendment’s role in guaranteeing everyday rights most Americans take for granted—such as the right to say what we think, worship where we please or complain to, and about, the government.

More than 350 panelists have appeared on the 94 shows produced during *Freedom Speaks*’ four-year run. They include: The Rev Jerry Falwell on school prayer; former Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders on the tobacco-advertising crackdown; Jack Valenti on the V-chip; former NAACP executive director Benjamin Hooks on civil rights; Presidential candidate Lamar Alexander on campaign financing.

National American Civil Liberties Union President Nadine Strossen has appeared on three programs. Why does she keep coming back?

“The show examines issues that the ACLU is out there fighting on every day,” Strossen says. “The ultimate defense for



Freedom Speaks’ moderator Kerry Brock asks rap star Chuck D to clarify a point in the episode “Music Censorship” as Barbara Wyatt, president of Parents’ Music Resource Center, listens.

civil liberties is a well-informed and concerned public. And *Freedom Speaks* performs a tremendous public service in that regard.

"In my opinion, it is by far the best source in the country for educating and inspiring members of the general public about their rights. Constitutional rights are worth only the paper they are written on if the public is uninformed and uninterested. I'm always happy to support the show's mission."

CNN commentator Farai Chideya, also a frequent panelist, says: "*Freedom Speaks* is important because it combines high production values with breaking news, which includes tackling often-ignored issues."

The latest headlines viewed from a First Amendment perspective provide educational opportunities. Attempts to censor Rush Limbaugh, for example, led to a program on free speech in broadcasting. Court rulings that squelched abortion-clinic protests inspired a program about freedom of assembly. Attempts to outlaw same-sex marriages prompted a show on the religious rights of gays and lesbians. A proposed constitutional amendment outlawing flag desecration led to a program on the right to protest. A call for controls of media violence cued a program about movie censorship. Calls for censorship of *The Turner Diaries*, the novel that reportedly inspired the Oklahoma City bombing, resulted in a program on book-banning.

At first, PBS stations didn't exactly jump at the chance to carry the series. Recalls Brock, a former Seattle television news anchor: "We signed two stations—our presenting station WHMM in Washington, D.C., and our local station WDCN—as production was beginning. One had to carry us, and the other probably felt sorry for us."

But two stations became 50 by the fall and doubled to 100 the following spring. After the first 12 episodes, *Freedom Speaks* evolved from a one-hour program with live audience to 30 minutes with no audience—the shorter version is easier for PBS stations to schedule.

There has been no shortage of issues from which to choose. The problem is narrowing choices to those with the most shelf life.

"We're just beginning to scratch the surface of First Amendment issues, all of which are changing constantly," Brock says. "The First Amendment is about so much more than freedom of speech and press; it's also about freedom of religion, petition and assembly—and that covers a lot of ground in a democracy."

But sometimes, a program just doesn't work because of the complexity of some First Amendment issues. "Take the 'creationism' episode, for instance, when one panel member launched into a monologue about the pre-Cambrian era, I knew we were going downhill in a hurry."

Another case in point: SLAPP suits. SLAPP is short for "strategic lawsuits against public participation." Most often, SLAPPs involve a community group protesting development by a big corporation. The corporation sues for libel, demanding millions in damages. That sometimes frightens the community group into silence. "It's a great First Amendment issue. But it's not a great TV program. Why? Most people have never heard of a SLAPP suit."

An experience with SLAPPs led field producer Jim Melchiorre to devise a rule of thumb for selecting good *Freedom Speaks* topics. Part of Melchiorre's job was to shoot "Voices," a man-on-the-street interview segment that runs with the credits of each show. The week of the SLAPPs show, Melchiorre found himself on Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles. He and the cameraman stood on a corner for 40

minutes, collaring passersby. No one had ever heard of SLAPPs.

Frustrated, Melchiorre went for a sure thing: students at the nearby Whittier Law School. Future attorneys, he reasoned, would know about SLAPPs. He cornered five third-year students eating lunch under an umbrella on an outside patio.

"Not a single third-year law student, just four months away from the bar exam, had ever heard of a SLAPP suit," he says.

"Since this was Los Angeles and all the students were young, handsome and beautiful, they were not about to pass up a chance to appear on camera on a nationally televised program. All agreed to give us comments about SLAPP suits as long as I agreed to try to explain the term to them. I did my best, and they responded with five pretty decent opinions, three in favor and two against."

Following this experience, Melchiorre devised his new rule-of-thumb for choosing *Freedom Speaks* topics. He calls it "The 'Voices' Test." If 10 people on the street are unlikely to know or care about a subject, pick another topic.

But judging from audience response, *Freedom Speaks* most often passes the test. After an episode on the rights of abortion protesters, for instance, a viewer who identified himself as "vehemently opposed" to abortion wrote to "express appreciation for one of the more neutral and balanced moderations on the topic" that he had seen.

Freedom Speaks includes a large number of college professors and secondary-school teachers, many of whom ask for VHS copies of specific shows to use as teaching aids.

While every show attracts viewer E-mail, some produce more than others. After one about stores that refuse to sell controversial CDs, a viewer E-mailed: "Wal Mart may, in fact, be exercising censorship, but it is also catering to its customers' desires. If customers don't

agree with its policy, they can choose to purchase music from another store."

A program about religion in schools prompted this response: "We've tried metal detectors and security people; now it's time to give prayer a try. It can't hurt!"

One about how television may harm children inspired this letter: "If concerned parents don't like what's on TV, maybe they shouldn't buy a satellite dish and a two-foot TV screen. Maybe they should give their children a book instead."

This fall *Freedom Speaks* moves to state-of-the-art production facilities at the Newseum, the Freedom Forum's museum of news located just outside Washington in Arlington, Virginia. Taping for the fifth season began in August.

"We hope to involve some Newseum visitors now and then," Brock says. "I want the show to enjoy fluidity, and there is an automatic studio audience everyday at the Newseum."

The move to the nation's capital will also make it easier to attract high-profile guests. "Where else can our panelists be assured of always focusing on First Amendment and media issues, knowing at the same time they will have plenty of competition to argue with?"

"Just as the First Amendment protects the speech of one—whether popular or unpopular—it also guarantees the rights of the other. To hear one voice, we must be able to hear them all." ■

Broadcast consultant Jack Isenhour has 25 years of broadcast and production experience. Sandra Dickerson is a Nashville-based media consultant.



He Has a “Little” List

Glued to the Set: The 60 Television Shows and Events That Made Us Who We Are Today

by Steven D. Stark;

The Free Press, New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Singapore; 1997.

By Lawrence Laurent

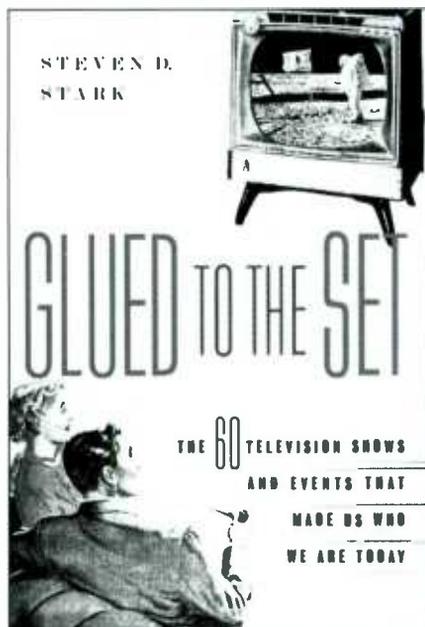
We are approaching the 50th anniversary of commercial television in the United States, and some people are determined to make the anniversary almost as important as the new millennium in 2001. Last summer, *TV Guide*, with help from the technicians at cable’s *Bravo* channel, chose the 100 most important programs in television history. Big surprise! Most of the most important events were episodes of situation comedies. Bravo, indeed.

Now comes Steven D. Stark, dependent upon Alex McNeil’s *Total Television* and with great help from Brooks and Marsh’s *Complete Directory of Prime Time Television* (published and updated regularly, most recently in 1997) to provide *Glued to the Set: The 60 Television Shows and Events That Made Us Who We Are Today*. It is an heroic, commendable effort, a useful reference, and as arbitrary as a traffic

cop’s decision. Those addicted to nostalgia can wallow for days in Stark’s selections, which begin with Milton Berle’s *Texaco Star Theater* and *Howdy Doody* in the 1940s and progress one decade at a time to Oprah Winfrey and *Wheel of Fortune* in the 1990s.

Stark is identified on the book’s jacket as “a regular commentator on popular culture for National Public Radio’s *Weekend Edition Sunday* and the Voice of America.” He is also described as a “former Lecturer in Law at Harvard Law School and columnist for the *Boston Globe*.” He lives in Boston. He is also a glutton for punishment.

He takes up four pages in an appendix to explain just how he chose these particular 60 shows and events. First came popularity, as defined by ratings. Stark explains: “I began with a presump-



Review & Comment

tion that any show that hit number 1 for a season would receive strong consideration, on the theory that any program that popular had obviously struck a chord with viewers. Even then, I eliminated nine of those 23 shows on various grounds and came up with this initial group: *Texaco Star Theater* with Milton Berle, *I Love Lucy*, *Twenty One* (substituted for *The \$64,000 Question*), *60 Minutes*, *Dallas*, *The Cosby Show*, *Roseanne*, *Home Improvement*, *Seinfeld*, and *E.R.*"

If you have any quarrel with Stark, it will come from what he admits he eliminated. Arthur Godfrey's *Talent Scouts* got the ax "because its influence was limited." Remember *Wagon Train*? It lost out to *Gunsmoke* because there "was nothing to write about *Wagon Train*."

Bonanza may have been number one for three seasons but, instead of making the list of 60, had to be content with being "discussed in the *Gunsmoke* chapter." O.K.? Got that straight?

Well, then, what about *The Andy Griffith Show*, which led the ratings during the 1967-68 season? Sorry. Stark decided it is merely "a continuation of the trend to 'rural sitcoms' that was best exemplified by *The Beverly Hillbillies* and so gets dealt with there." Andy will have to be content with endless reruns and endless residuals.

What about *Marcus Welby, M.D.*? It was number one in the 1970-71 season, but Stark has determined that it didn't belong with the all-time programs. Dr. Welby was handled "by contrasting it with *E.R.* at the end of the book." Take two Nielsen pocket pieces and call Steven D. Stark in the morning.

I have long shared with top Hollywood film producer Robert B. Radnitz the firm conviction that the best all-time situation comedy, for its merry invention, its character development, and its sheer, unforced

joy, is the *Cheers* series. Stark can't see it. Just not his pint of bitters.

It may have been the number one-rated program for the 1990-91 season, but rules Stark, "it was more the embodiment of previous innovations (like the workplace comedy) than a trend-setter itself." So much for Coach, Mayday Sam Malone, Norman, Carla, Cliff, and Woody. You will have to take some of Sam's black coffee and telephone Steven D. Stark. Don't forget to reverse the charges.

Of all the omissions in this list of programs and events, the one that never rates a mention of any kind is that unique telecast in 1954 that commemorated the 100th anniversary of electric power. Forgotten it already? So has Stark. It was "Festival of Light," the only program ever produced for commercial television by David O. Selznick and the only entertainment that appeared on all four networks—ABC, CBS, DuMont and NBC—plus a few independents. In some markets with no more than four television stations, the two-hour program did what cannot be done now: it scored a 100-percent share.

It was on every set in use in Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Boston, Detroit, and some other cities. Yet this star-studded drama-variety show is never given a single mention in 340 pages. Stark's research has been formidable, but a search through public records is really no substitute for having lived with commercial television from the beginning.

Some well-wisher should have explained to Stark that a number one rating usually results from three factors. The first is a quality show with strong appeal. The second is strong network and affiliate promotion of the program and the third is weak opposition. Something akin to Illinois football coach Bob Zupke's formula for an All-American football selec-

Review & Comment

tion: "A weak schedule and a poet in the press box." Dr. Welby, for example, was number one on Tuesday nights at 10 when his main competition came from the still developing *60 Minutes*. When *60 Minutes* moved to Sunday evening, Welby's ratings dropped accordingly.

Still, what has survived in this book is worth keeping. Another scholar, with another set of criteria, will make another list as good or better. Future scholars, one hopes, will be able to distinguish between *casual* and *sequential*: the first provides the main thrust or reason for a series of events and is often confused with the second, which is merely one series of events coinciding with another. For example, Stark little notes the social and political upheavals of the past 50 years. We have had a population shift—from farm to city to suburb, from north and east to south and west—that makes the story of the exodus from Egypt look like a high-school class picnic.

Our economic base has shifted from manufacturing to services, with all the social and political consequences of change. The United States, which had embraced isolationism in the 1920s and 1930s, grew into the dominant world power, with interests and obligations on every continent. The shortening of the workday brought with it a fear of an "avalanche of leisure," which gave people the free time to develop into world-class couch potatoes.

How many hours could farmers, hunters, and fishers who labored from sun to sun, Monday through Saturday, with church on Sunday, have been able to spend in front of a television set? But, read Mr. Stark, and you will turn up some columnist, audience researcher, academic theorist, book writer, or public lecturer who will assure everyone that each soci-

etal change, for better or for worse, can be attributed to television alone.

When hogs fly. When shrimp whistle. Television can contribute to change. It results from change. It meets a mighty need in an increasingly lonely world marked by steady technological advances, the longest run of prosperity in our nation's history, the decline in the importance of the family, and a political system that strives to serve this revolutionary society.

Oh, well, it was a pre-television Canadian humorist named Stephen Leacock who first advised us that "a half-truth, like a half-brick, carries farther."

Is there room in this review for some minor quibbles? Who, please, is "Rickie Laine," who "appeared 40 times on the *Ed Sullivan Show* (page 60)? Could that be singer Frankie Laine? And Stark has five separate citations from pre-eminent American broadcasting historian Erik Barnouw, whose first name is misspelled "Eric." And in a discussion of professional football (page 168), no one apparently advised Stark that the league-wide package of network telecasts became possible only after the National Football League got an anti-trust exemption from Congress. The price of that exemption: a pro-football franchise for New Orleans to win the support of Sen. Russell Long (D-La.) and House Majority Whip Hale Boggs (D-La.).

Or the discussion (page 163) on the decision by CBS-TV President Robert D. Wood to junk the highly rated schedule of bucolic fare like *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *Mayberry*, *R.F.D.*, *Hee Haw*, and others. Stark does not mention that the decision was prompted by a single motive: the stations owned by CBS were in big-city markets, and not one of those stations was

Review & Comment

rated first in its market. Then came the urban appeal of *All in the Family* and the onrush of other Norman Lear “hostility” sitcoms.

Speaking of *All in the Family*, would you believe that—according to Stark—it “changed the way we thought about speech”? Never mind TV insult-masters Barry Gray, Joe Pyne, or Steve Allison. Stark contends: “The sophistry of Pat Buchanan and Michael Kinsley on CNN’s *Crossfire* was only an upper-class version of the Bunker style. It’s even possible to imagine Mike and Gloria learning from their elders, flinging insults on *The McLaughlin Group* in the nineties.”

Stark tells us that Lucille Ball caused the women’s movement in the United States with her persistence that she be given a

role in husband Ricky’s night club act. O.K. But how about a little credit for Cameraman Carl Freund who developed the three-camera technique that lifted television comedy—and Lucy—out of the static, talk-controlled comedy. Miss Ball was a wonderful comedienne and she was always the first to give credit for her success to her husband, Desi Arnaz, her writers and her chief cameraman. One learns that secondary, theoretical sources aren’t always the best. Instead, one must ask those who were part of the success of *I Love Lucy* and the three series that followed with her as the lead.

If one reads long enough, he or she will discover that mass media had no use for the uniformed police of the big cities until Jack Webb produced *Dragnet*. Well, for

Stark’s list of “the 60 television shows and events that made us who we are today”:

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| 1. <i>Milton Berle & The Texaco Star Theater</i> | 17. Presidential News Conference | 31. The Super Bowl | 46. CNN |
| 2. <i>Howdy Doody</i> | 18. <i>Perry Mason</i> | 32. <i>Brady Bunch</i> | 47. <i>Hill Street Blues</i> |
| 3. <i>Meet the Press</i> | 19. <i>Dick Van Dyke Show</i> | 33. <i>All in the Family</i> (sitcom revolution) | 48. MTV |
| 4. <i>I Love Lucy</i> | 20. The Space Program | 34. <i>Mary Tyler Moore Show</i> | 49. <i>Bob Newhart</i> |
| 5. <i>Dragnet</i> | 21. <i>Beverly Hillbillies</i> | 35. <i>Masterpiece Theater</i> | 50. <i>Entertainment Tonight</i> |
| 6. Bishop Sheen: <i>Life Is Worth Living</i> | 22. Assassination Television | 36. Local News | 51. <i>Cosby Show</i> |
| 7. <i>Today</i> | 23. <i>Mister Ed</i> (and TV escapist comedies) | 37. <i>Tonight Show</i> | 52. <i>Star Trek</i> |
| 8. <i>See It Now</i> | 24. <i>Dating Game</i> | 38. <i>60 Minutes</i> | 53. <i>Roseanne</i> |
| 9. Disneyland | 25. Walter Cronkite, <i>CBS Evening News</i> | 39. <i>Saturday Night Live</i> | 54. <i>America’s Funniest Home Videos</i> |
| 10. <i>Lawrence Welk Show</i> | 26. <i>The Monkees</i> | 40. <i>Roots</i> | 55. The Hill-Thomas Hearings |
| 11. <i>Ed Sullivan Show</i> | 27. <i>Mission: Impossible</i> | 41. <i>All My Children</i> | 56. <i>Oprah Winfrey Show</i> |
| 12. <i>Gunsmoke</i> | 28. <i>Smothers Bros. Comedy Hour</i> | 42. Macintosh | 57. <i>Home Improvement & Seinfeld</i> |
| 13. <i>American Bandstand</i> | 29. <i>Laugh-In</i> | 43. The Hostage Crisis | 58. QVC |
| 14. <i>Twenty One</i> (and the quiz-show scandals) | 30. <i>Sesame Street</i> | 44. <i>Dallas</i> | 59. <i>E.R.</i> |
| 15. <i>Leave It to Beaver</i> | | 45. Debating Our Politics: The Ronald Reagan Show | 60. <i>Wheel of Fortune</i> |

Review & Comment

opens the scripts, with the trademarked, short stings, were written by James Moser. And Webb benefited enormously from a publicity hound named W.H. Parker, who just happened to be the Chief of the Los Angeles Police Department. (Gene Roddenberry, long before *Star Trek*, was a member of the LAPD. He wanted to walk a beat and learn law enforcement first hand. Parker quickly made Gene his speechwriter, which lasted until Roddenberry started selling scripts for TV.)

And, by the way, the *Warner Brothers Presents* series that brought the first Hollywood major studio into TV, was not produced by "William Warner" (page 64). The producer was William T. Orr, who was sort of a Warner, since he had married Jack Warner's adopted daughter, Joy Page. Orr gave rise to the Hollywood quip, "The son-in-law also rises."

Then there's Rod Serling, who makes the elite list of 60 for *The Twilight Zone* but not for his brilliant contributions to the development of television drama. Stark remains unimpressed by claims that the so-called Golden Age of television was based mainly on original, problem-probing dramatic series. He cites old complaints about interference from sponsors and what are now called politically correct limitations.

My memory continues to contain a sense of wonder and gratitude for *Playhouse 90*, *Kraft Television Theater*, *Studio One*, Pat Weaver's "Spectaculars" on NBC and the Westinghouse adaptations of fine dramas as CBS specials. Their content might at times have been conditioned by an advertiser's quest for unconditional acceptance of a product, but—to one's sorrow—the content of Hollywood productions was conditioned by timeless market pressures that demanded that "real profits" should come from syndicated

program sales. Better or worse? Neither. Just different, with different requirements and different strengths.

And not all that new, either. For instance, William Shakespeare had to withdraw *King Richard II* from performance, lest its abdication scene offend Richard's kinswoman Queen Elizabeth I. And Shakespeare, scholars tell us, wrote *MacBeth* to please King James I and his visiting royal relative from Denmark. James was fascinated by witchcraft. And there wasn't an advertising agency in the entire English realm.

Glued to the Set, then, is still fun to read. It can be enjoyed, but one must keep up one's guard and beware of writers making all-inclusive claims about a magic medium. As television pioneer Robert Carr Doyle, who innovated television production at ABC and at NBC in the 1950s, once remarked: "Television is like sex. When it is good, it's great. And when it is bad, it is still pretty good."

Glued to the Set must be regarded as still pretty good. ■

Laurence Laurent is the television critic (emeritus) of *The Washington Post*. He teaches critical writing and reviewing at the George Washington University and is a trustee of the Broadcast Pioneers Library. In his years as a critic and teacher, he estimates he has seen, for better or worse, more than sixty thousand TV programs.

THE PERFECT GIFT!
A SUBSCRIPTION TO

TELEVISION
ON
QUARTERLY

THE JOURNAL OF
THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF TELEVISION
ARTS & SCIENCES

- 1 SUBSCRIPTION-1 YEAR \$30.00
 - 2 SUBSCRIPTIONS-1 YEAR \$60.00
 - 1 SUBSCRIPTION OVERSEAS-1 YEAR \$35.00
- PLUS \$2.00 FOR POSTAGE AND HANDLING

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

CHECK ENCLOSED

MAIL TO:
TELEVISION QUARTERLY
111 WEST 57th STREET
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10019

Politics and Players in the Digital World

Defining Vision: The Battle for the Future of Television

By Joel Brinkley

Harcourt Brace & Company: New York.

By John V. Pavlik

When General Sarnoff set the aspect ratio of the television set equal to that of 1930s cinema for a demonstration at the 1939 World's Fair, he did more than set a basic TV viewing standard. He set in motion a process that would remain unchanged in the American television industry for more than half a century.

Although television is an innately technological medium, its history is as much a story of politics as technology. We have lived with the same basic television viewing system since Gen. Sarnoff's day, with the only notable technological exception being the introduction of color in 1953. Changing the system, making even the slightest improvement, means altering a complex multi-billion dollar technological infrastructure that includes replacing everything from cameras and transmission towers to television receivers. The actors on this stage are powerful and committed to preserving their business interests.

Thus, it comes as no surprise that the story of its future isn't any different. This story is persuasively revealed in Joel Brinkley's new book. Brinkley begins his story with an examination of the remarkable psychological shockwave that served

as the catalyst powerful enough to bring a substantial change to the gargantuan American television industry.

"In the sultry summer days of 1988, America was seized by a panic," Brinkley writes, "and it rose from the most unlikely of threats: a new TV that offered startlingly sharp pictures on a wide, movie-style screen. High-definition television it was called. Japan had invented this new wonder." It caused a kind of "Sputnik shock," triggering a national policy reassessment not unlike the effect the Russian's launch of the first communication satellite in 1957 had on America's commitment to the exploration of space.

The race was on to build a television system that would be superior to that of the Japanese. Although many doubted it possible, American engineers managed to create a digital high-definition television system. The Japanese invention offered at least four advantages over standard NTSC television: (1) sharper pictures, (2) better color, (3) wider aspect ratio, and (4) better sound, because the sound would be digital. The American invention added significantly to these advances by bringing digital technology to the entire system, and enabling programmers to offer a new

Review & Comment

range of interactive services similar to those found on the Internet and World Wide Web today, and, through compression, offer more channels of programming through the same bandwidth.

Because it will be digital, inventing tomorrow's television system is not as simple as it was in Gen. Sarnoff's day, however. Today's players include not just broadcasters, politicians and regulators, but consumer electronics and computer hardware and software manufacturers, such as Bill Gates's Microsoft. Late in 1996, the Federal Communications Commission took a profoundly important step in charting the future of television. The FCC broke the cross-industry log-jam that had threatened to delay the implementation of a new television system indefinitely, by deciding to let the marketplace determine which method of video display format would emerge as the dominant standard in America.

The two choices are interlaced and progressive scanning. Interlaced scanning is what is used in today's television system because of its efficient use of bandwidth. Interlaced scanning is clearly superior for analog television because it introduces fewer artifacts into the picture. Progressive scanning is what's used in computers. Progressive scanning is clearly superior for digital signal transmission and will produce a better picture in a digital television set.

But because of the inherently political system that controls the future of television, the FCC punted rather than make a decision about which scanning system would be favored. As a result, Americans may not ultimately have the best digital television system. Much as beta is a technically superior video recording and playback system to VHS, the marketplace favored VHS and that is what most Ameri-

can consumers have today.

In April of 1997 the National Association of Broadcasters held its annual meeting in Las Vegas. At that meeting, the assembled conferees heard from television set manufacturers who declared that as many as two million Americans would have digital television sets in their homes by 2002, giving them access to not only technically superior television, but an avenue to the Internet. At the same NAB meeting, Bill Gates and his computer colleagues upped the ante by declaring that by 2002 more than 14 million homes would be equipped with computers that could play digital television. Gates explained that the computer's advantage is that it can be upgraded to accommodate digital television by adding an inexpensive video board, while digital television sets will likely cost several thousand dollars.

Brinkley provides a thorough and meticulous job of reporting on the politics of the epic struggle for the control of television's next generation. His book's only real shortcoming is that like many journalistic treatments, it sometimes oversimplifies the facts to blend them into a story. Even if there had been the political will prior to 1988, it is unlikely even the wildest inventor could have devised a workable digital television system any sooner since it is dependent upon a variety of technological advances in silicon chip production and performance that were sufficiently perfected, miniaturized and reduced in cost only by the late 1980s.

Nevertheless, Brinkley's book offers a well-researched and well-written chapter in the history and future of American television. It's even rumored to have caused a "Sputnik Shock" of its own in Japan, where *Defining Vision* is virtually required reading for executives and engineers alike at NHK, where high-definition television

Review & Comment

had its birth many years before.

The most intriguing question left largely unexplored by the book is how digital television will affect programming. Will digital TV merely mean better pictures or will it lead to better content? Although producer Dick Wolf suggests that we live in the golden age of television, and points to the high quality of writing of shows such as *Law & Order* and *E.R.*, the fact is that much programming is still very marginal in quality. It is especially marginal for audiences that provide little market for advertising dollars, such as children.

Will the development of digital television change this situation? There are three reasons why it might. First, the introduction of digital television and corresponding advances in compression technology means expanded channel capacity. This additional channel capacity means programmers can introduce either additional programming or new forms of programming. Ed Quinn, the president of McGraw-Hill Broadcasting and general manager of KGTV, the San Diego ABC affiliate and a McGraw-Hill station, envisions a digital future where his company will likely aggressively explore new programming opportunities because of the increased channel capacity of digital television. He sees possible programming synergies between his company's broadcast operations and educational publishing.

Digital television also means new creative opportunities for program producers. Interactive multimedia content is today seen only in any real manner on the Internet, but in a digital television environment, interactive video is a near-term possibility. Mike Flaster, associate general manager for programming for San Diego public broadcaster KPBS, is convinced there are "creative imperatives" in the

offing as digital television goes online over the next 18-24 months. Flaster, who received the 1995 Public Television Programmer's Association Programmer of the Year Award and a 1995 CINE Golden Eagle Award for Television Documentary Excellence, is a veteran producer of quality programming and sees digital technology as an opportunity to "serve emerging communities of interest" through interactive programming. This may represent the long-overdue fulfillment of the 1934 Communications Act's admonition to broadcasters to serve in the public interest, convenience and necessity.

Finally, digital television means the introduction of new players in the programming mix. Computer hardware and software providers and consumer electronics companies represent significant new entrants into the world of digital television and their impact on programming, especially the development of interactive video, is a great uncertainty. Software titan Bill Gates has already challenged conventional notions of online journalism through his forays into Internet publishing ventures such as Microsoft *Sidewalk* and *Slate*.

Of course, none of these opportunities means digital television will necessarily lead to better programming. We may, to paraphrase Newton Minow and Craig LeMay, find ourselves abandoned in a digital wasteland. ■

John V. Pavlik is the executive director of The Center for New Media at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, he is also a professor. He is the author of *New Media Technology: Cultural and Commercial Perspectives*.

AN INVITATION

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

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

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

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

If you send an article, please observe the basics: manuscripts double-spaced, 2 copies and stamped return self-addressed envelope. If you have an idea and want to sound us out before you write an article, send along a few descriptive paragraphs.

Address your article or presentation to:

Richard M. Pack
Editor
Television Quarterly
111 West 57th Street
New York, New York 10019

The First True TV War

Bosnia By Television

Edited by James Gow, Richard Paterson and Alison Preston
British Film Institute, London
Distributed by Indiana University

By Bernard S. Redmont

Reporters, broadcasters and historians call the Yugoslav conflict of the early '90s "the first true television war." More so than the Gulf War of 1990-91.

Both conflicts dramatized the changing role of the television foreign correspondent. Newsgathering technology has transformed our work in ways we could not have imagined when we covered earlier operations like World War II, Middle East wars, Algeria, Vietnam and assorted civil disorders from Africa to the developed world.

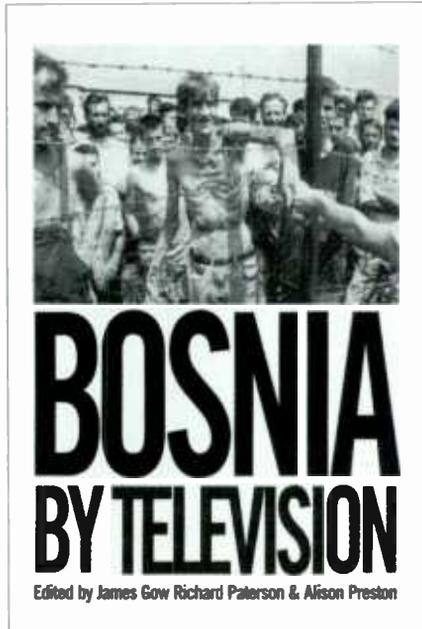
New global media technical advances have outstripped our imaginations. The portable satellite dish for sending back images and for telephone contact, and the very small ENG cameras, including the 8mm. mini-camcorder, plus capacity for field editing, now join the mix of jet travel, and the

perils of disorder, bias, censorship and manipulation in the world of electronic journalism.

We bird the news out, not just supersonorically, but at the speed of light. Crews can now shoot clandestinely in places that would otherwise remain shrouded. The dangers of the battlefield also force safety-seeking crews to spend more time depicting gut-wrenching refugee situations and the aftermath of battle devastation.

So it is that international diplomacy is often overtaken by the rapidity of modern media.

So it was that the reality of the satellite dish operating in a war theater, with its possibility of immediate "real time" transmission and the universal presence of the camcorder gave the "Yugoslav War of Dissolution" its status as the most comprehensive media-dominated war ever.



Review & Comment

True, Vietnam, with its filmed reports, was a television war. But these reports were delayed. The Gulf conflict took it one stage farther, with its video images and instant reporting (when not censored), using portable satellite dishes to uplink from the battlefields or Baghdad.

Yugoslavia—and Bosnia—went beyond the Gulf War in terms of instant reporting. The personal reports of video camera bearers, even amateurs, made it the most recorded and reported of all conflicts. What's more, free-lancers could frequently slip into Yugoslavia from nearby western Europe in a way they could not do in other wars.

These are some of the insights to be gleaned from the research and reflections in the latest publication of the British Film Institute, *Bosnia by Television*.

The work is actually a compendium of analytical reports by a diverse group of observers—some journalists, some academics, some researchers. It is divided into four sections (1) Witness to War; (2) Political Influence; (3) War Studies, Media Studies; (4) Comparing TV news coverage in a dozen countries, using one week in the war.

The contribution of Nik Gowing, whose essay in Part II is called "Real-time Coverage from War; Does it make or break Government Policy?" shines out as best of all. As Diplomatic Editor for Britain's Channel Four News, Gowing monitored day in and day out the proliferation of ethnic and regional news around the world. This proliferation is matched, he says, by that of lightweight technologies—portable video cameras such as the Hi-8 and flyaway satellite dishes—"which let us cover an increasing number of these conflicts."

Watching the matrix of incoming video on the monitors in his newsroom—20 or 30 screens—Gowing thinks of all the conflict coverage as so much "supermarket" war video: "There's far more real-time war than we've ever seen before." Editorially, editors and producers can pick and choose "just like walking down shelves of breakfast cereal. One day Nagorno-Karabakh, the next day Tajikistan or perhaps Georgia or Afghanistan, then a bit of Angola, Liberia or Yemen, and perhaps Algeria if we are lucky."

Much of it never gets on the air. And usually, he says, like every good supermarket, a lot of the goods these days are cut price, especially if shot and reported by enterprising freelancers and independents with Hi-8s.

But the main principle, of course, is: "No pictures, then no coverage of a conflict."

Martin Bell of the BBC has christened this era, "The Decade of the Dish." Real-time TV images, virtually live, from a battlefield satellite dish in Sarajevo or the British UN base at Vitez pointed up some conflicts and put them on the diplomatic radar screen, Gowing notes. In Bosnia, the dishes made Sarajevo into a visible symbol of Serb aggression, accessible to the outside world.

Gowing is tempted to paraphrase Erasmus' 16th Century saying: "In the country of the blind, the one-eyed man—the television camera—is king."

This book analyzes the influence that TV coverage has, the conflicting personal and political pressures that emerge, and the competition for truth.

All the themes are still with us: Dissolution in the Balkans; war criminals—and most of the perpetrators still walking

Review & Comment

around unpunished; national and ethnic rivalries and biases; the survival of a multi-cultural Sarajevo; intervention advocacy by journalists; "ethnic cleansing"; the Dayton peace accords and the NATO-led force in Bosnia, headed by the United States, Britain and France. Hovering over all of this, is the fear that the Balkans could slip back into war after troops leave, if they do as scheduled in July 1998.

Policymakers and leaders the world over now keep a CNN monitor going all the time in or near their offices.

Gowing contends there is no automatic cause-and-effect relationship in which the real-time TV coverage of the horrors of Bosnia or Somalia or Rwanda creates a demand that "something must be done" and also drives the making of foreign policy.

No doubt policy makers curse the horrors correspondents put on their television. In the Gulf, he points out, "governments could control and choreograph TV coverage of a war over which they had ultimate control and thus coerce the public to back their war aims. And they were helped in this by the desert terrain and the Saudi reporting restrictions."

In Bosnia, however, governments could do little to censor. "They cannot dictate what we shoot, report and transmit on our satellite dishes. But the coverage was 'skewed.' TV teams worked and lived close to the UNPROFOR troops. Much of the horror of Mostar was not reported in the way that Sarajevo was. Because of the dangers, there was no satellite dish to transmit what UN officials called the even more evil horrors of the Croat siege of Mostar," Gowing explains.

In a village near Vares, a UN official saw large numbers of corpses of Muslim men, women and children hanging on a scaffold, but it was never witnessed by a TV camera

and therefore elicited no public outrage.

Real-time pictures, when they are available, provide "enduring images that no words in a diplomatic cable or military signal can ever convey," as Gowing puts it. "Diplomats are used to working methodically, slowly, systematically and reflectively. Real-time TV pictures compress response times in a crisis. They put pressure on choice and priorities in crisis management. They skew responses." They thus provide not only information but a nuisance to diplomats.

Gowing thinks the TV coverage in the future will create emotions, but ultimately make no difference to the fundamental calculations in foreign policy making. For one thing, "few officials in Europe ever have the time or inclination to watch the TV news." Most would claim a desire to resist and limit the power of TV, even when it is brought to their attention.

In Washington, there are Administration officials who are "CNN junkies," but not as many as is conventionally assumed, Gowing says. Sometimes when they see it, they don't trust it—not because it lies but because it skews impressions.

Part IV of *Bosnia By Television* is called "Company Coverage." It is an unusual comparison of TV news coverage in different countries during one week—May 16-21, 1994. On the whole, it is an impressive, interesting and useful study, although it is handicapped by stuffy language and academic jargon.

The BFI recorded all the evening news programs on all national channels in Algeria, Austria, Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Macedonia, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, Turkey, United Kingdom and the U.S. In addition, it recorded the evening news output from the all-news channels

Review & Comment

Euronews, CNN International and Sky News as well as items on Bosnia from Reuters Television (RTV)—assuredly a prodigious enterprise.

As an example of this content analysis, the visit of the Russian patriarch Alexi II to the former Yugoslav republics and the *hadj* (pilgrimage) to Mecca by Bosnian president Alija Izetbegovich were used by some broadcasters to make a connection between historic and religious references and the conflict. Greece, Russia and Serbia were sympathetically linked by religion, and their TVs had religion-oriented reports on the patriarch.

A Muslim country like Algeria ignored the patriarch but reported the *hadj*. Most Western European TV services, however, ignored the familiar Christian (though Orthodox) event while covering the Islamic item as having more resonance.

Broadcasters close to the war, like Slovenia and Macedonia, tried to make the conflict appear to be a distant event while those in “faraway” Western countries tried to draw awareness to the humanitarian plight of Bosnians.

Handling of sourcing was also interesting: Giving the viewer a source implied either certainty or skepticism, depending on which source was quoted, reliable or unreliable, enemy or ally, and how quoted. Sources were used to highlight contradictory news or used in a way that indicated partially.

Although true that TV news needs pictures, that sample week did not show that the news was picture-led; there wasn't that much blood and gore. The coverage had to use talks, building damage or troop movements. Problems often arose if words and footage were not synchronized.

On Euronews, it was often unclear which side pictured soldiers or civilians were on, or where the bomb damage was

and how severe. In the shelling of the main hotel in the Bosnian city of Tuzla, Reuters TV blamed the Serbs for the attack, as did the Croatian, Slovenian, Turkish and French reports. CNN was neutral. Greek TV implied it was a Muslim attack.

The presence or absence of journalists on the ground clearly made a difference. Sky News, France, Austria, Italy and Britain had reporters in Bosnia, Turkey and Macedonia rarely. Greek TV had correspondents in Belgrade and Pale but not elsewhere. Slovenian TV abstained because Slovenia wanted to distance itself from the conflict.

Reporting of a foreign war even through a known correspondent, as the BFI study demonstrated, makes the event easier to comprehend and brings it near to home. Having a journalist reporting from the scene, as in the mortar attack on the marketplace in Sarajevo, made the report more forceful. Having to quote news agencies or other broadcasters “distanced” the report.

Increasing use of news agency footage by broadcasters inserted a physical news-gathering distance between the person who shot the images, the person who described them in the accompanying text, and the person who eventually did the voice-over.

The analysis of United States broadcast coverage by Ananatha Babbili, of the Department of Journalism of Texas Christian University is lamentably thin. It does, however, make the point that out of 922 minutes of news studied during the chosen week, only four and a half were devoted to Bosnia and

Review & Comment

Yugoslavia.

A CBS News story on Bosnia had no correspondent and was read entirely by the news anchor, over shots of troops on their way to the battle lines. Bosnians were referred to as "Muslims."

The conclusion of this analyst is, as Walter Lippmann noted in 1922, that the accurate and complete portrayal of events abroad has remained elusive in U.S. democratic discourse in this century. As Baffili puts it, "The emphasis on speed, artificial censorship of news and views by the gatekeeper, and the tendency to simplify complex global issues within limited vocabularies act as barriers to healthy public awareness and democratic debate."

The essay on British TV by Alison Preston analyzed news programs on BBC1, ITV, Channel Four, Sky News, Euronews, CNN International and Reuters TV, but not BBC World Service TV (because it is not available domestically).

British media coverage of the war was found to be marked by confusion and disagreement over the legitimacy of what to report and how to report it. Among the major difficulties cited were how far to "humanize" the war, and whether the focus should have been the prosecution of war and its casualties or the search for diplomatic peace.

Many journalists advocated some sort of intervention. Government ministers opposed it. The result—non-intervention—actually pointed to "a lack of journalistic power." And TV news was not a consistent witness to events. There were periods when coverage was minimal. The balance in favor of the position of the Bosnians came from the predominance of documentation of their difficulties rather than any overt siding by journalists.

General Lewis MacKenzie of UNPROFOR commented after his tour of duty that

"the media was the only major weapons system I had."

French TV carried a tremendous amount of news of Yugoslav events. Much of it was related to France, including an ardent campaign by French intellectuals in favor of the Bosnians and reports about French troops on the scene. Nevertheless, the TV reports maintained a clear neutrality, at least for the week of the analysis.

On the other hand, Italian TV journalists tended to make statements and editorialize the news, the study reports: "Audiences were bombarded with generic maps, confusing graphics, stereotypes of killed lovers and injured children and were not informed in any detailed way—either by words or images—about the up-to-date military situation, changes in local politics, daily life under siege conditions, or the redefinition of borders."

A pro-Serb bias was evident on the seven terrestrial channels in Russia, particularly the main ORT public channel program *Vremiya* (Time). The message was that the Serbs had peaceful intentions but were being thwarted by aggressive Muslims.

Serbian television, as might be expected, put out pure and simple propaganda for the policies of the ruling party and government, in the selection and order as well as presentation of news. Croatian TV was similarly biased, but Slovenian TV did a better job. In Slovene eyes, the Serbians were the aggressors.

Reflecting on newscasts of the Bosnian conflict, the report finds a tacit understanding by producers/editors that reports of the war should be characterized "by frantic language, hectic cutting and sensational commentary, all strategically set against an exciting background where bombs explode and the sound of machine-gun fire can be heard." In a word, what our

Review & Comment

American producers pithily like to call “bang-bang.”

For the TV team, the risk of being killed or wounded is high. Experienced war correspondents like Martin Bell of the BBC have a precise idea of the optimal distance from the front line: “being close enough to hear and see something but not so close as to risk being killed or wounded.”

Some critics regret that the international media for the most part took the position developed by the Serbs and accepted by the Croats: that there were three nations fighting against each other, with each nation claiming its “own territory.”

To a great extent, because of television, the world forgot that the Bosnian government was the only one arguing for mutual co-existence of all three ethnic groups. In some TV reports, the defenders of Sarajevo were called Muslims, but in fact all three ethnic groups co-existed in the defending army, and the commander of Sarajevo for some time was a Bosnian Serb. Nuances were sometimes lost in the reporting.

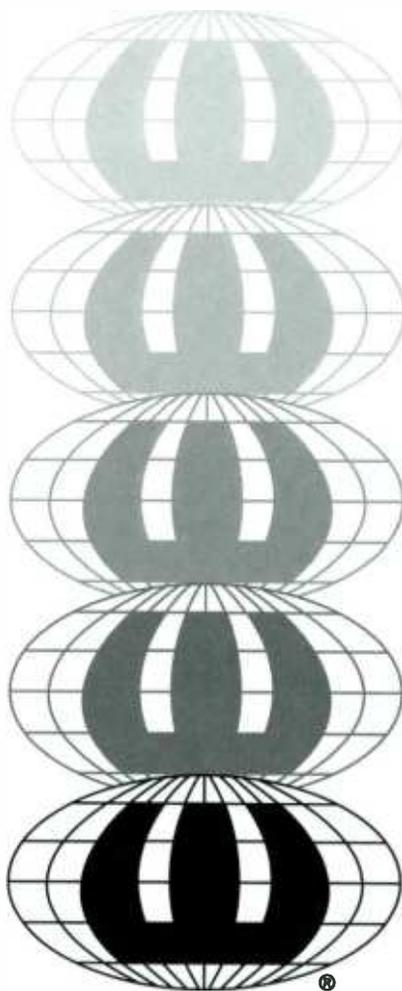
You cannot easily summarize so diffuse a book, but its abundance of material will certainly be of great benefit to scholars in the field of media, politics, strategic studies and history, and above all to media professionals.

From these studies of how the war in Bosnia was reported, readers will better be able to appreciate the variable roles played by TV news in the formation of public opinion and government policy.

The book also prompts us as journalists and educators to reiterate at least one conviction. The sometimes forgotten rules of all good reporting are still valid and are worth restating: In war and peace, cherish careful reporting and editing, solid

research, meticulous checking and rechecking, and an abiding consciousness of fairness. ■

Bernard S. Redmont was a foreign correspondent for CBS News and Westinghouse Broadcasting/Group W. He covered Yugoslavia and 55 other countries, and a number of assorted wars. He is Dean Emeritus of Boston University College of Communication and the author of *Risks Worth Taking: The Odyssey of a Foreign Correspondent*.



**WORLDVISION
ENTERPRISES, INC.**

A SUBSIDIARY OF
SPELLING ENTERTAINMENT GROUP INC.

**The World's Leading Distributor
for Independent Television Producers**

New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Atlanta, London, Paris, Tokyo,
Sydney, Toronto, Rio de Janeiro, Munich, Rome



American Movie Classics is dedicated to everyone who believes that movies should be watched in their original form -
uncut, uncolorized and commercial-free.



America's Original Classic Movie Network

See Marilyn Monroe in *The Prince and The Showgirl*, Cary Grant in *Kiss Them For Me*, Audrey Hepburn in *Love in the Afternoon* and John Wayne in *Blood Alley* all on AMC.
"American Movie Classics" is a registered mark of American Movie Classics Company. © 1996 American Movie Classics Company.

Photo credits: Marilyn Monroe: Neal Peters Collection; Audrey Hepburn: Lester Glassner Collection/Neal Peters; Cary Grant, John Wayne: Kobal Collection; background art: Photofest

THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF TELEVISION ARTS AND SCIENCES

A Non-profit Association Dedicated to the Advancement of Television

OFFICERS

Charles Dolan, *Chairman of the Board*
John Cannon, *President*
Malachy Wienges, *Vice Chairman*
Darryl Cohen, *Vice President*
Linda Giannecchini, *Secretary*
Walter Gidaly, *Treasurer*

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

David Ashbrock
Robert Behrens
Darryl Cohen
C. Paul Corbin
Arlene Dahl
Dr. Albert K. DeVito
Jan Dickler
Bud Ford
Robert Gardner
Linda Giannecchini

OFFICERS

Tom Rogers, *President*
Kay Koplovitz, *Chairman*
Larry Gershman, *Vice Chairman*
Robert Phillis, *Vice Chairman*
Fred Cohen, *Treasurer*
George Dessart, *Secretary*
Arthur Kane, *Executive Director*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Biagio Agnes, *Italy*
Andy Allan, *England*
Charles L. Allen, *England*
Antonio Asensio Pizarro, *Spain*
William F. Baker, *USA*
Gabor Banyal, *Hungary*
Carlos Barba, *Venezuela*
Joseph Barry, *Ireland*
R. Basu, *India*
Frank Biondi, *USA*
Steve Bornstein, *USA*
John Cannon, *USA*
John Cassaday, *Canada*
Chang Chia-hsiang, *Rep. of China*
Sam Chisholm, *England*
Chiu Fu-Sheng, *Rep. of China*
Jérôme Clément, *France*
Bert H. Cohen, *USA*
Fred Cohen, *USA*
Michael Collyer, *USA*
Fedele Confalonieri, *Italy*
Collin Davis, *USA*
Lee deBoer, *USA*
Dixon Q. Dern, *USA*
Antonio Diaz Borja, *Spain*
Ervin Duggan, *USA*
Richard Dunn, *England*
Richard Edelman, *England*
Jean-Pierre Elkabbach, *France*
Richard Frank, *USA*
Jordi Garcia Candau, *Spain*
Mabel Garcia de Angel, *Colombia*
Larry Gershman, *USA*
Michael Grade, *England*

HONORARY TRUSTEES

FORMER PRESIDENTS
Harry S. Ackerman
Seymour Berns
Royal E. Blakeman
Walter Cronkite
Robert F. Lewine
Rod Serling
Ed Sullivan
Mort Werner

Alison Gibson
Allen Hall
John Hammond
Wiley Hance
Jane Hanson
Michael Hardgrove
Jan Jacobsen
Hubert Jessup
Sara Lee Kessler

FORMER CHAIRMEN OF THE BOARD

John Cannon
Joel Chaseman
Irwin Sonny Fox
Lee Polk
Richard R. Rector
Thomas W. Sarnoff
Robert J. Wussler
Michael Collyer
David Louie

Roger La May
Julie Lucas
Ed Morris
Sandra Pastoor
Henry E. Plimack
Bryan Russo
Janice Selinger
Bill Stainton
Jack Wilson

THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL

Herbert A. Granath, *USA*
Jean-Louis Guillaud, *France*
Bruce Gyngell, *Australia*
Klaus Hallig, *USA*
Peter A. Hermdorf, *Canada*
Hisashi Hieda, *Japan*
Jason Hu, *Rep. of China*
Robert Igtel, *USA*
Hirozo Isozaki, *Japan*
Kunio Ito, *Japan*
Brian Johns, *Australia*
Arthur Kane, *USA*
Chatchur Karnasuta, *Thailand*
Mikio Kawaguchi, *Japan*
C.J. Kettler, *USA*
Herbert Kloiber, *Germany*
Kay Koplovitz, *USA*
John Laing, *USA*
Roger Laughton, *England*
Geraldine Laybourne, *USA*
Georges Leclere, *USA*
Pierre Lesclure, *France*
Malcolm Long, *Australia*
James A. Loper, *USA*
David Louie, *USA*
Igor Malashenko, *Russia*
Gary Marenzi, *USA*
Roberto Marinho, *Brazil*
Len Mauger, *Australia*
Julian Mounter, *England*
Sam Nilsson, *Sweden*
Robert O'Reilly, *Canada*
Lucio Pagliaro, *USA*
Mike Phillips, *England*
Robert Phillis, *England*
Jobst Plog, *Germany*
Randy Reiss, *USA*
Mirtha Rodriguez de Saba, *Paraguay*
Tom Rogers, *USA*
Hugo Romay, *Uruguay*
Xavier Roy, *France*
Johnny Saad, *Brazil*
Jeff Sagansky, *USA*
Jeffrey Schlesinger, *USA*

Pedro Simoncini, *Argentina*
Sergei V. Skvortsov, *Russia*
Michael Jay Solomon, *USA*
Yair Stern, *Israel*
Jean Stock, *Luxembourg*
Dieter Stolte, *Germany*
Howard Stringer, *USA*
Donald L. Taffner, *USA*
Helmut Thoma, *Germany*
Pelle Tornberg, *Sweden*
Katherina Trebitsch, *Germany*
R.E. "Ted" Turner, *USA*
Curtis Viebranz, *USA*
James A. Warner, *USA*
Gerhard Zeiler, *Austria*
Alexander Zilo, *Italy*

FELLOWS

Julius Barnathan, *USA*
Ralph Baruch, *USA*
Edward Bleier, *USA*
Richard Carlton, *USA*
Murray Chercover, *Canada*
Bruce Christensen, *USA*
Mark H. Cohen, *USA*
George Dessart, *USA*
Irwin Fox, *USA*
Ralph Franklin, *USA*
Karl Honeystein, *USA*
Norman Horowitz, *USA*
Gene F. Jankowski, *USA*
Arthur Kane, *USA*
Ken-Ichiro Matsuoka, *Japan*
Len Mauger, *Australia*
Richard A. O'Leary, *USA*
Kevin O'Sullivan, *USA*
Renato M. Pachetti, *USA*
James H. Rosenfield, *USA*
Dietrich Schwarzkopf, *France*
James T. Shaw, *USA*
Pedro Simoncini, *Argentina*
Donald L. Taffner, *USA*
Donald D. Wear, Jr., *USA*
David Webster, *USA*