

# TELEVISIONS

VOL. 5, NO. 3 AUTUMN 1977 \$2.50

Philo Part Three  
The Quality of TV Acting  
HEW Parenting Programs  
Viewer Sponsored TV  
Video Portraits



# THE 526TH LINE

**Connecticut Public Television (CPTV)** has some unexpected new faces on its Board of Trustees this year. A broad-based coalition, including Hispanics and women, seeking more and better community programming, scored a victory when their alternative slate of seven received the highest number of votes at the annual membership meeting of the station in September.

The Board has 39 members, thirteen elected each year. The coalition felt their efforts would be more successful by nominating less than a full slate and bullet voting for only those they had nominated.

Although seven out of 39 doesn't appear to give the new Trustees very much clout, the coalition is still optimistic. According to one new trustee, the usually low attendance at Board meetings may give the coalition a considerable amount of influence in a group that, in the past, has been more concerned with fundraising than with the exercising of its powers over such areas as programming. One trustee, apparently unhappy with the results of the election, reportedly resigned shortly after the vote was counted.

**NASA has added** several new experimenters to its satellite roster. The Women's Satellite Services Project of the National Women's Agenda (see last issue) has received conditional approval, subject to funding, to become a participant on CTS (Communications Technology Satellite), which is shared by the US and Canada. This makes the women's project the only PISA-related group to receive official NASA satellite status. It also means that public interest groups have started playing with the "big boys."

Another new experimenter on the CTS is Satellite Business Systems, the promoter of the "most advanced" commercial satellite system. SBS is a joint venture of IBM, Aetna Life Insurance, and COMSAT, which is, in turn, a joint venture of AT&T, IT&T, RCA, and Western Union.

According to P.N. Whittaker, president of SBS and a former IBM executive, "from inception, SBS has had in mind a rather specific customer set. This is the big corporations, the large governmental agencies, and certain industrywide consumers of communications services." (*Aviation Week and Space Technology*, March 21, 1977). So what is SBS, whose own satellite won't be launched until 1980, doing as a NASA experimenter? Insisting on their self-definition as "an applications experiment, not a satellite communications experiment," SBS claims to be studying the sociological effects of large-scale video teleconferencing and the integration of earth station facilities with prototype business equipment, such as high-speed fax, and freeze-frame video display. Who are we to say that marketing demonstrations to Rockwell International, Texaco, and Montgomery Ward, are not in the public interest?

**For Warner Cable Television** the hype word is "participation" and its Exxon-like logo is *Qube* (Tube?) *Qube* is the project name for the Columbus, Ohio system due to open later this year. It will feature 2-way, 30 channel, home terminal to central computer hookup for a predicted 100,000 homes. Revenues are up this year for Warner which owns 138 U.S. cable systems, and is a sub-

siary of Warner Communications, the conglomerate that got started in the death business and the shoe business (Kinney) and has now covered itself in Hollywood glamour.

The press releases read like the Tele-Prompter hype of 1972 with an excited investment in subscriber participation. This time instead of public access, the press releases are pushing the subscribers' freedom to "take tests, play games" and participate at home. L. B. Hilford president of the *Qube* division calls the Columbus construction, "the next giant step in television's sophisticated evolution."

The hot example of *Qube's* facility that he's sent us is a recent test in 200 homes where viewers participated in four 30-minute programs hosted by Bill Cullen, a mass *Price Is Right*.

But, the money bet is on the capability of the system to allow subscribers to select and pay for programming on an individual basis. It's worth noting that these businessmen still perceive enough of a public demand/need for participation that they use their resources to exploit it in this new venture.

**Vile Video**, our new category of editorial comment, has aroused three entries this quarter, and all we have to do is list them. In Texas, mourners can now use the drive-up window at the funeral home to pay their last respects to the deceased displayed on a video monitor.

A recent issue of the *AMA News* raved about the innovation at the Washington, D.C. morgue. A video camera scans the corpse for remote identification viewed on a monitor in a wood-paneled waiting room.

And, in Ohio, a PhD. candidate made the national news with his video test that is destined to replace the polygraph lie detector which we all know any con can beat. The eyes' micro-twitches and blinks invariably telegraph every prevarication.

**Yes Virginia**, there is a Frank Farkas. And he set up the Mall Media Network in Chicago's Evergreen Plaza. Farkas' "shoppervision" is viewed on what he calls a "golden tower": 8½ feet high structure with six TV screens up top, and six illuminated display windows below. Three screens show movies, cartoons, and other features, interspersed with 20 minutes worth of ads per hour. Two screens flash 10-second slides for mall merchants. The sixth runs UPI news service. Farkas plans to milk the Chicago market before going nationwide.

**As one House Communications** Subcommittee staffer put it, the behavior of public broadcasting executives during September hearings "is typical of a pattern where industries are fearful of changing the status quo." As a result, all but a few industry leaders presented a united front of self-serving pieties and pleas for more money. When chief staff counsel Chip Shooshan read a *NY Times* quote claiming that increased federal dollars in 1976-77 had gone for bureaucracy, not programming, the array of PTV moguls on the panel all but ignored the point.

They were, of course, fearful that bad press and open admission of their problems might cut into their long-range funding. The exercise was part of the Committee's so-called re-write of the 1934 Communications Act which has brought literally hundreds of witnesses

The extra scan line presents our Point Of View on the state of communication arts, business, and public action.

to Washington during this session, in all areas of telecommunications.

One observer of the proceedings was Frank Lloyd who was busy putting finishing touches on the Administration's new proposed legislation for public broadcasting as a consultant to the President. The bill and a Carter message was sent to Congress Oct. 6. Lloyd and others briefed Van Deerlin two weeks later. It will be interesting to see whether the public broadcasting industry maintains unanimity when called to testify next session on this carrot-and-stick bill. On the one hand it would authorize almost \$1 billion for the 1981-85 period, an annual jump of 50%. The bill would also prohibit CPB from "producing, acquiring, scheduling or distributing programs or selecting individual

program or series . . ." and open stations' board meetings and financial records, among other changes.

Recalling the series of witnesses from outside the industry what criticized the status quo, Van Deerlin said the bill "appears to go only part way in addressing the problems emerging at recent hearings: the duplication of functions between CPB and PBS, weaknesses in the board selection process, a truly shameful record in minority hiring and advancement, frustrations among independent producers seeking access to public television, questions raised by a rising dependence on corporate underwriting, the failure to achieve political insulation in funding, and the continuing 'stepchild status' accorded public radio."

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# RESOURCES

Damming the information flow. A catalog of people, meetings, books, survival techniques, and directions on how to find what we left out.

## REVIEWS

### Video Portraits by John Hunt: *Henry Miller 84, #1, Windward Avenue Sketches, Kim Study 1*, and more.

*The portrait interrupts Hollywood's formulas*

By LARRY KIRKMAN

"You had many ingredients, didn't you, in here?" A colorized red hand rises out of an orange bowl against a black background. Henry Miller loudly slurps another spoonful of the soup John Hunt has prepared for their Christmas Eve, 1975, dinner.

Miller sits frame left, full profile, a waist shot in an orange rectangle framed in red. You see his hand and the spoon in red travelling up to half a red head: the mouth, the nose, the eyes, the pate, the hair line at the back of the neck. The brain itself is an island of yellow. And frame right, above the soup bowl, wine glass and bottle with their black background is a yellow rectangle the same color as his brain.

There are many of these startling visually balanced painterly moments in John Hunt's *Henry Miller 84, #1*.

This 16-minute tape is the result of one sitting. Shot on a portapak, holding the same frame throughout, the portrait allows you to study this individual without the formulas of shot variation that have rigidified documentary.

This carefully selected shot works to brush aside the mystique of Henry Miller, while maintaining the importance of the subject of his intelligence, his history, and capacity for pleasure.

John is out of the frame to the right for all but a few seconds of the tape when he passes behind Henry to put some water on the stove. But the nose room balances their conversation.

This profile shot not only catches the movements of Henry's eating; it allows those colorized hands without arms to create depth with broad left handed gestures. Occasionally, he stops and puts the glass or the spoon down to sweep or shake his right hand in the foreground.

The isolation of the bowl from his mouth emphasizes the common gesture as his hand works between them. Henry's eating, scraping the bowl, his *mmm*'s of appreciation break down the concepts of genius that separate us from the author.

Through his voice John is present in the shot as an equal participant, as strong a character as Henry, telling his own stories, demonstrating a conversation with Henry Miller. They talk about cooking, communism, actresses they've lived with, drinking wine at 84, John's grandfather and Henry's son, mellowing as you get older, and the air-conditioned nightmare.

In the six portraits of John's that I've viewed, balances between presenting himself as a character and still using a probing style that is carefully unbiased: "that's very interesting" . . . "why do you say that" . . . "I don't know (with a pause)." It's interviewing learned from Studs Terkel: swapping stories, needing

to know the answers to your questions, without irony, or obsequiousness.

John sees this version as "a test panel leading to a larger work, that I visualize very much like Warhol's early silk screen panels using the same subject with slightly different techniques and color schemes."

He explains colorizing the tape: "I didn't want people to see him as an 84-year-old partial cripple . . . I also was in a frame of mind to show painters about video painting. I wanted to demonstrate the hardware I was using, by putting Mondrian and Panasonic side by side, using the same color scheme as Henry employs in his beautiful water colors that cover the walls of his house."

#### Portraits as a category

Why does this simple form, inherent in the tendencies of video, seem so bold?—The sustained shot, the close up, the home visit, the conversation?

More and more video artists are calling their works portraits. At first thought, the category seems useless. It overlaps with ethnographic film, oral history, and verite or direct cinema. It's confused by biography, photographic portraits, any fictional movie with a hero, and the mini-documentary featurettes on a "real character" served up to end the nightly news with a light note.

Early photographs were portraits expressing a use value that was connected to the cult of memory, the importance of having a picture in a drawer, a likeness that defeats death. The transition to shots of empty city streets was a transition that painting had made earlier for another audience. Walter Benjamin makes this argument in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*.

In another, less famous, essay, on *Storytelling*, Benjamin describes the difficulties survivors of the 1st world war found in talking about their experiences. "More and more often there is embarrassment all around when the wish to hear a story is expressed. It is as if something that seemed inalienable to us, the securest among our possessions, were taken from us: the ability to exchange experiences."

Films learned from novels to reflect experiences beyond the grasp of any single one of their characters.

There are two trends at work here. One is the rise of the story without a hero, the mass story like Eisenstein's *Strike* or Renoir's slices of history, *Rules of the Game* and *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange*.

The other is the rise of the common person as a significant, more than comic, figure.

In Western history, this is often measured from the Christian stories starring a carpenter, fisherman, prostitute, *et al*. But, it is a battle still being fought: stories of common people, like *Marty*, a

butcher, are rare enough to be startling even though they usually limit everyday life to the maudlin success of love.

Inflation, war-strategies, diplomacy, unemployment, and ecological disaster cannot be understood simply out of one individual's experience.

On the one hand, portraits are studies of the failure of the storyteller to counsel us. On the other, they are models of working intelligence struggling to make sense out of things.

Talking heads, the anathema of educational television, suddenly come to life when they're connected to a body, a home, a class, and activity.

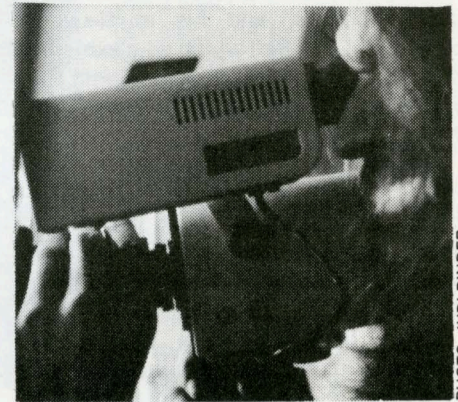
Portraits leave out what is most important in modern life: the group effort, and the process of collective decision making. But, by isolating complete visual characters, they lay the basis for more complex work to come from the artists and begin to create an audience who will be prepared to understand it.

Peter Hall's English film *Akenfield* is a collection of portraits that dazzlingly leads the way in organizing documentary characters into a full historical context. The farmers of a small rural town act out their history for three generations, in costume, following a transition from primitive, to mechanized, to automated farming, through two world wars, and the imperial decline.

Recent commercial films, like *Jonah Who Will Be 25 In The Year Two Thousand*, and *We All Loved Each Other So Much*, are attracting audiences who respond to a cast of major characters that extends beyond the Hollywood love triangle.

The wide range of examples that these films represent should influence video portrait artists to develop new dramatic forms. But, until new structures can be developed, no structure is better than the formulas, and the portraits refuse to be a distraction.

At their best, portraits are like brilliant home movies, similar to the letters of the 19th century that we now devour for touches of reality we rarely find in literature.



John Hunt at work.

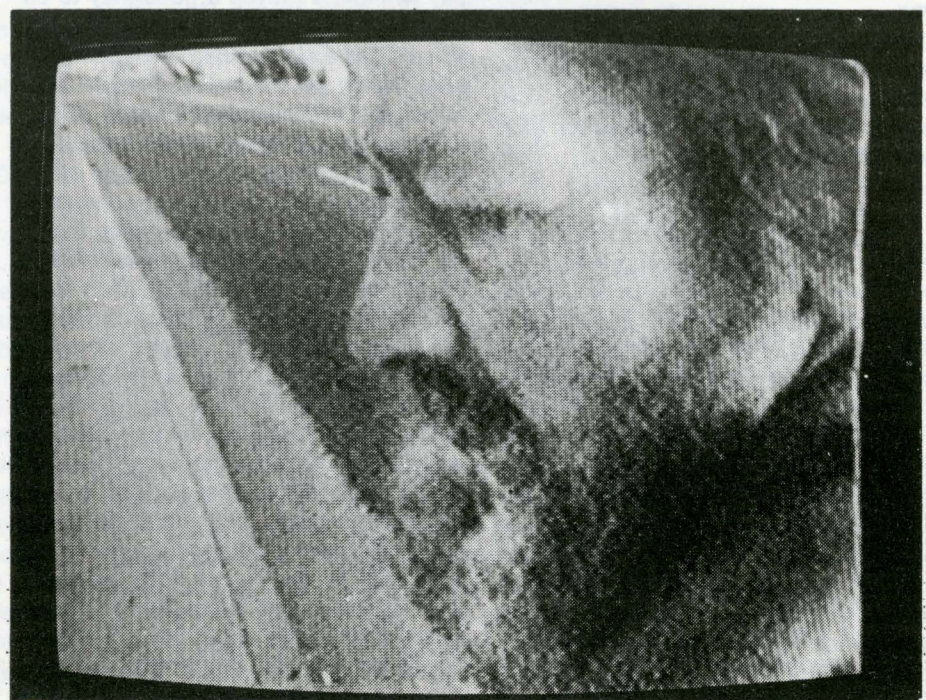
PHOTO: JUDI BINDER

#### The example of John Hunt

I'm taking John Hunt's work as an example for discussion because he makes use of such different styles, subjects, and technology that at first his collection of portraits seems to defy generalization.

John Hunt's past is as varied as his list of portraits: a bartender, son of a Sing Sing prison cook, Michigan State for TV in the late fifties, Hollywood, documentary cameraman, Australia. He wrote scripts, studied film classics, made the rounds: Berkeley, underground papers, film benefits, a how-to-film for the SF Mime Troupe to use on their college tours (this was when they were doing the American premier of Brecht's *Congress of the White Washers*). He wrote an important essay on *Salt of the Earth* and *My Son John* called "What did you do Daddy in the war against communism?" helping to introduce John Howard Lawson in the context of Godard and Bunuel to the "new left."

Shortly before the invasion of Cambodia, he joined Los Angeles Newsreel, showing films to support the anti-war movement, filming the Chicano Moratorium, day-care sit-ins, the breakfast program, Jonathan Jackson's funeral. He chaired the education committee for the Entertainment Industry for Peace and Justice; he wrote and directed a multi-



John Hamilton points to "the actual actual" in the *Windward Avenue Sketches*.

PHOTO: LEONARD RIZZI

media performance in collaboration with the United Prisoners Union, called *Who's In Who's Out*.

In 1972 he was one of the founders of the LA Public Access Project. He tape jockeyed a live video show on Theta Cable, produced training tapes for the University of Wisconsin. He became the staff video producer for Environmental Communications (EC) an art and architecture outfit. While at EC, he produced an hour edit of space footage called *El Conquistadores*, and his multi-screen portrait of Larry Bell which was exhibited with the sculptor's work at the Santa Barbara Museum, MIT, and elsewhere. Then the other portraits.

The reason for this resume of John Hunt's career is to illustrate the sophistication that leads to portraits, which would seem to be the most simple-minded, backward looking form of visual media.

Henry liked the tape when John showed it to him, but he found the *Windward Avenue Sketches* much more interesting. The sketches are black-and-white visits with John Hamilton, a wino, black, junk-collector, ex-soldier, ex-disc jockey, grey-headed, an unemployed professor of the history and sociology of Venice, California. He tells the end-of-the-line stories of addicts, alcoholics, crooked doctors, and small businessmen in the territories of chicanos, blacks, and poor

whites that are being swallowed up by investment as the last undeveloped ocean land in L.A.

The sketches are a murder history of Venice, a tour, the concrete spot where a suicide landed, the stairs that led to the open door, the police here, the victim there, all in a context of real estate profits and the resigned resistance of the blues, a cackling fool's anger with tears. Hamilton says, "Every step in this town is a damn shame."

The shock value of the confessional tabloid, the titillation of sex and crime are gutted in these portraits because the portrait is too simple: it rejects the techniques that relentlessly roll Kojak and Jimmy Breslin forward.

In commercial television the characters, with token individuality—the bald head and the lollipop—are put through the same plot and aesthetic exercises week after week, and the individual is merged with the general. Technique makes every story the same, no matter how timely the content, how connected to the headlines, like the photograph that beautifies Third World misery or "the idiocy of rural life."

John interrupts the raconteur, the joke teller, the gagman, the ranter, to explore the process of thinking. Unlike the Miller tape the *Windward Sketches* aren't a conversation, but the effect is similar, searching for techniques like the profile

that will force the viewer to consider the subject fully. He took one story, taped in the same location several times, and jump cut the beginnings and ends of sentences with the wino Hamilton in different clothes, matching different inflections.

In another style, shot in color, his 26-minute *Kim Study 1* uses the full face of a young woman in warm colors that celebrate her health and alertness, her sensuality. Using music, jump cuts, and repetition, again he emphasizes digression and the difficulty of deciding, evaluating, remembering, summing up.

Thinking is harder than TV ever portrays it; mass media doesn't demand or demonstrate sustained effort.

Kim says that she would like to do an act about old love songs of her parents' generation.

"What do you mean?" John says. She hesitates. He sings, "those wedding bells are breaking up that old gang of mind." "Like what?" he says.

The question is answered indirectly, cautiously, with the power of the screen to show ambivalence in a blink. She rambles, connects love songs to Coleridge, quotes the *Ancient Mariner*: "I could see the midnight sun . . . the jaundiced eye . . . aurora borealis." As she talks about Sarah Vaughn, the music begins. The popular song builds underneath. Kim starts to sing herself: "I could see the

midnight sun." Her and Sarah Vaughn, a round.

There are more portraits; panels of *Larry Bell*, the sculptor at work and struggling to clarify his "success"; *Isabel*, a reader, a spiritualist who has a two-sided conversation with John, asking him questions then reading his feelings to answer the questions herself; *Robert Irwin*; *Venus Venice*; *Joe Greenberg*; *Ernestine Keppler*. The famous rise with the masses in this collection of portraits, not out of them. Portraits reflect a need to speak and listen that is corrupted in gossip and talk shows. But the feeling of participation that is exploited by the broadcaster is fulfilled in the video portrait.

John understands the weakness of individual stories and he doesn't see his portraits standing alone. They have to be taken together: a tableau of personalities. A show of portraits, a collection of portraits, on public television or in a wing of the National Portrait Gallery.

The mass media have always promised that anyone can be a star, but the subtext is "eat your heart out." Portraits say everyone can be a star. The difference is between the lottery and income redistribution.

**John Hunt and his portraits can be reached through Environmental Communications, 64 Windward Avenue, Venice, California 90291.**

## Arlen on TV: You Go to A Circus for Whatever A Circus Is.

Michael Arlen writes an irregular column called "The Air" about half the year for *The New Yorker*. The column had first been written about radio in the 30s by Ring Lardner. In 1966, when Arlen had been writing fiction and occasional pieces for *The New Yorker*, he began thinking he might like to do some criticism. Editor William Shawn suggested to Arlen that he try TV. "I put the suggestion aside for a while," says Arlen, "because I couldn't really think how to do it. That fall I said, what the hell, I'll just start looking at the set in order to write." And he did, beginning with a review of "some damn fool thing that ABC was doing."

But Arlen quickly turned to a more serious subject in his column—the treatment by TV of the Vietnam War. The pieces were collected in a book called *The Living Room War*, one of the best books written about TV in many reviewers' opinions.

Last year Arlen published another collection of TV essays, *View from Highway One*.

"The Air" made its autumn reappearance following a half-year hiatus. The excerpted interview, printed below, was conducted by TELEVISIONS editor Nick DeMartino last winter.

**Arlen:** I don't know the history of the movies all that well, but I suppose in the beginning it was more brutal, more entrepreneurial and more open. Then it got institutionalized. The point at which it reminds me the most of what television is now was the period of the 40s before the anti-trust laws separated distribution and production. Movies were a very closed operation. It was virtually impossible for people to freelance in the movies. Studios had their contract players, contract directors, their NY offices to control the theatres. They had a whole goddamned network system. They became a terribly rigid and timid enterprise. I think that television will be smarter than that, will have to be smarter than that because at the very time that the movies were most threatened by television, the movies became more conventional, more reactionary. It was only after they were

knocked for a loop by television that they picked themselves up from the floor and began reforming a little bit. It's now a much looser situation.

**TELEVISIONS:** Some would say that we're entering that period of television.

**Arlen:** Well, it's one of those things that definitely has to come. Freelance work. It has to come. Logic is pointing in two directions. One is that business organizations shouldn't control so much. And the other saying that there are all sorts of talented people who need a way of expressing themselves. The public, if they knew this was possible, would also want this.

**TV:** Do you feel that you have a role in fostering that in your work?

**Arlen:** I never thought much at all about my role. I don't really believe in the role of the critic in any sort of constructive way, except in a writer's way. I think the term critic . . . there are people who write a review for a particular purpose to say whether a play is a good play to be seen or a bad play to be avoided. That obviously has a highly functional place in a newspaper or magazine. People talk about the excessive importance of the critic, in the matter of drama critics especially . . . Clive Barnes' ability to close a play. But what strikes me . . . whenever I go to the theatre I do it by going to the *NY Times*, noting what shows will either be in preview or coming into town from the ads or notices . . . I call up and try to get some tickets for it. It's pretty easy to do. Within two days after the show's opened it's impossible to get tickets for it. The reason for that is the same reason why Clive Barnes can close a show is because nobody has what you call a contributive interest in the theatre. It's all the endless audience. If people were really interested in the theatre, to a great degree people could figure out for themselves what to see, especially since there are almost no new playwrights around.

I think that television persists in beaming something that will be agreeable, and not troubling, and distracting, and all the things that I suppose comprise a classic definition of entertainment. Only in this case, the entertainment is mass-pro-



PHOTO: MAURICE JACOBSEN

duced beyond belief by people who have no time and no encouragement to care very much about what they do. Just too much stuff done too quickly to no great purpose, except to you know to spread over the land each evening. So it's very unlikely that something notable should come out of it.

And there's no point in pointing out that there isn't anything notable. You don't go to a circus to watch gymnastics of high distinction, really. Or animals of great beauty. Or great comedic acts. You go to a circus for whatever a circus is. You hope it won't catch fire, mostly. But I think to write about television then, . . . well, it's all going to change, that this is a strange sort of transitional period.

People get quite furious, people make demonologies going both ways. People who are on the castle side peer down from their battlements with terrified and enraged shrieks and say, "Get away from these walls. This is a wonderful castle here. If you'd just let it alone, it'd be one of the best castles around. Everything would go on wonderfully well. Everyone in the village is very happy with the castle arrangement." And the people outside the walls are yelling and screaming, "We can't go on like this and so forth and so on."

But, the fact is that the permanence is all illusory. Not all illusory, I mean, there's a lot of dollars and cents and lawyers to make sure that it isn't all illusory. But it seems to me that it's a transitional period. And the things that you publish . . . not that I've read everything . . . but the few I've read . . . tell us that changes are seeping in gradually. It never takes place as fast as it ought to.

But the present structure is like a dream structure held together by will. And anything held together by will is incredibly vulnerable. I think that a lot of the people are too smart for that. I don't know, maybe they've had too much analysis . . . They're smarter than the old movie moguls or the medieval barons. That's why I think they'll be quite smart enough to open up a few back rooms, and finally they'll retreat, they'll have a few upper bedrooms for the family.

I think that what's going on right now in programming, these so-called long things, the short things. These people are trying to figure out what the hell is going on. I don't think that anyone in television knows what's going on. It's a mistake to blame them for that. I mean, it's such a curious country.



From an Energy Action spot.

## PROJECTS

# Minority Center Expands

By VALERI BYRD

Communications Resource Center will be the new name for Cablecommunications Resource Center, an expansion of five-year-old minority consulting firm into a national business resource center for the development of minority ventures in all sectors of the media, communications and telecommunications industries.

According to Charles E. Tate, vice president of programs, and Phil Watson, senior program manager of the Booker T. Washington Foundation, CRC's parent group, the group will "broaden its programs and activities in minority community economic development and minority business enterprise by expanding its cable television venture program to include broadcast radio and television, master antennae television, pay cable, cable radio, film, video, radio and other media software and related communications technologies and industries."

The Foundation's activities undertaken by CRC since its inception will be the basis for the program design. One activity is venture development. Venture groups now hold 30 franchises with a market value of \$30 million, 7 minority-owned systems were in operation and CRC developed \$82 million in equity and debt financing. Some venture groups accomplishments include organizing 100 local venture groups of 25-50 people to compete for local franchises; chartering 75 local CATV venture corporations; financing and placing 8 CATV systems into operation; and creating 45 jobs by operating systems.

Another activity is developing and designing a program to insure that a pool of skilled technicians are available to manage and operate minority-owned CATV systems. A system in Dayton, Ohio, has trained 200 technicians over the past two years and has a 92% placement ratio.

The proposed major difference between Cablecommunications Resource Center and Communications Resource Center is that the expanded program will inaugurate fewer new systems. The Foundation believes that financing will be easier to obtain for established operating enterprises with proven earnings records.

"Balance growth and economic development is the thrust of the Carter administration. Telecommunications is received the same as transportation and other industries. They're growth industries. We must function as a development organization," said Watson.

**Anti-oil-monopoly spots** have been running on D.C.'s WTOP the past two months, and will continue through October. Energy Action Committee, Inc. filed a fairness complaint against TOP for running a Texaco ad 53 times glorifying an "integrated" industry.

The FCC admitted there was a fairness problem, and forced the station to take on opposing spots. WTOP was forced to help in the production to the tune of an estimated in kind \$50,000 to \$100,000. Though that's not much compared to some \$100 million the oil companies are spending on promo this year.

**Communicating:** Although ham radio operators were pioneers of broadcasting, today they are a curious sub-culture obscured by the ponderous structures of big-time media and surrounded by swarms of land-mobile phone types and CB'ers. Now, an amateur group in New York, the Communicators Association of America, is pioneering the concept of inexpensive, low-power, interactive community television.

"Communicating" calls for 10-watt receiver/transmitting terminals, a repeater, and the conversion of local televisions to receive the signals. Ed Piller, president of the CAA, says a communicating system is operating in Syosset, N.Y., with five terminals at a construction cost of about \$1,000 each.

The CAA has a membership of 550 people around Long Island, including a number of experienced radio engineers and technicians who have scrounged used equipment and built the stations on a volunteer basis. They are conducting community broadcasting workshops in the Syosset schools, and are developing their experiment with the Center for Advanced Study in Education and the Institute for Research and Development in Occupational Education, of the City University of New York.

The system is designed for educational and public service, with stations at schools, libraries and other social centers. A program would be broadcast from one station while groups at the others would be able to interact at any time with

comments or presentations of their own, through their ability to transmit as well as receive. The viewing public can respond by phone. The broadcast range is from a 10 mile radius to a potential 15.

The CAA, CASE, and IRDOE, have initiated a petition for rulemaking at the FCC which calls for designation of a "communicating" band between 470MHz and 930MHz, with preference for TV channels 70 through 83 (806-890MHz), a range now used by land-mobile phone operators. They hope to have some impact on the US position at the World Administrative Radio Conference in 1979, which will consider the redesignation of telecommunications frequencies. The petition is being reviewed by the FCC Broadcast Bureau and the Office of the Chief Engineer which will decide to begin either a notice of inquiry or rule-making. For further information: CCA, 80 Birchwood Park Drive, Syosset, New York 11791. (516) 938-5661, or CASE/IRDOE, 33 West 42nd Street, NYC 10036 (212) 221-3895.

—Steve Spector

**Small Business Administration** is considering policy changes to allow loans to be used for media ownership, FCC Chairman Richard E. Wiley told a minority communications group on Sept. 2.

"It does seem to me that the major impediment to minority ownership in broadcasting is the accumulation of sufficient funds to purchase stations and the SBA policy of not extending loans to media ownership. One of the things that I suggested to Pluria Marshal was the possibility of seeing whether the Small Business Administration in a long time policy of not making loans for media ownership could be changed," said Wiley at the commencement session of the National Black Media Coalition Conference.

In April, the FCC and NBMC held a minority ownership conference with representatives from the minorities, banking, brokerage and government communities to discuss solutions for minority ownership. The SBA policy change was an outcome of that conference.

Pluria Marshal, president of NBMC, said he considers the SBA policy change "a step in the right direction. I think that the SBA area is a very key area that we will have to get some assistance from and, hopefully, this rule making will be presented and made part of the SBA rules that will allow monies to be loaned for minority acquisition."

This proposal was presented to Vernon Weaver, administrator of the SBA, by Wiley and Benjamin L. Hooks, former FCC commissioner and present executive director of the NAACP. —Valeri Byrd

**Line 21:** HEW is sponsoring a meeting of the major broadcast networks and programmers on Nov. 1 to do some gentle arm-twisting in the federal effort to secure and implement the use of TV scan line 21 for captioning for the hearing impaired.

PBS has, with HEW monies, developed and tested the captioning system which involved the use of a decoder on an individual television or in the control room of the transmitting network. If the decoder is used at the transmitting point, all TVs receiving that signal will also receive the captioning. If the decoder on an individual set is relied upon, then only sets with decoders will receive captioned TV.

In their field tests, PBS uses both systems with a couple of hours of programming a week captioned for the general audience and twenty deaf-related institutions also using individual decoders during other times. The decoder unit, developed by Texas Instruments, will cost about \$250 when it goes on the market next year. A market survey showed that if only PBS programming were captioned,

estimated sales for the decoder would be 1.13 million.

Now, of course the big question that remains is whether the three networks will cooperate. The FCC has already ruled in favor of reserving line 21 for captioning but apparently the networks are still coming up with all kinds of things for which they might need this one line of the television picture.

It seems inevitable that they will eventually give it over because as one HEW official put it, "they can't go on fighting something with nothing." HEW Secretary Califano is personally hosting this meeting to make it all less painful for them. When asked if they were handed a program already captioned would they use it, word has it that ABC said yes and both CBS and NBC rejected the idea.

Rationale behind the networks' willingness to oppose the handicapped, which is like fighting motherhood, centers on the commercial broadcasters' reluctance to open their airwaves to any data uses.

The next step might be a U.S. version of the "teletext," which is being introduced in Europe over TV, cable and telephone. Hundreds of print-out items are available to viewers with special decoders. At a push of a button they can tune out not only programs, but advertisements!

**Boston changes:** WGBH's New Television Workshop (125 Western Ave., Boston, MS 02134. 617-492-2777) has leased at lowcost its small-format video equipment to the Boston Video and Film Foundation, which takes over day to day operation of workshop functions in video, as well as with its own film equipment. (Contact John Rubin or Susan Wall, 39 Brighton Ave., Boston. 617-254-1616). The Workshop, meanwhile, will concentrate on larger projects in its third year of operation. An impressive record of work with artists is described including areas of dance, comedy, video art, and drama. Notable is the upcoming *Collisions*, which combines independently generated art pieces by eight video artists, with futuristic comedy sketches and transition material by Jane Wagner and starring Lily Tomlin, among others. The show, which is virtually finished, awaits a bit more money before final editing can be done. The 60-minute special, a pilot for series possibilities, cost \$109,000 thus far.

**SOCOM:** Following the successful model developed in the Bay Area by Phil Jacklin, UC-Santa Barbara speech professor James T. Lull is organizing a Southern California Committee for Open Media (SOCOM). The group will focus on public service announcements, free speech messages, ascertainment, and has produced a series of programs about local issues for the Santa Barbara cable system. For details, write Lull c/o Department of Speech, UCSB, Santa Barbara, CA 93106. (805) 961-2148.

**Broadcast gripes:** Video and filmmakers who have broadcast their work or tried to gain access to broadcast air are being sought by the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF). Jeff Byrd, a member of their access committee, will send you a copy of a one-page questionnaire which logs data about the process of access to TV. Write: AIVF, 99 Prince St., NYC 10012. (212) 966-6447. A report of the preliminary survey results was included in AIVF's excellent testimony submitted to the House Communications Subcommittee about indies and public TV.

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**Black broadcasters:** NAB/NABOB (National Association of Black Owned Broadcasters) held its broadcast management seminar at the NAB in Washington, D.C. Sept. 21-22. Included on the agenda were advertising, ratings, White House Conferences on Communications and the FCC. Advertising and ratings generated the most controversial exchange because black broadcasters recognized that Arbitron does not conduct a complete census of their audiences which deprives them of revenue.

The FCC announced they would let a contract for a study of minority ownership in broadcasting. The study is a result of the minority ownership conference held at the FCC in April.

**D.C. media battle:** D.C. community activist groups are still dogging the heels of millionaire Joseph L. Albritton, owner of the Washington *Star* and WJLA-TV.

Adams-Morgan Organization, National Capitol Area Chapters of NOW, D.C. Media Task Force, and the National Black Media Coalition challenged Albritton's original acquisition of then-WMAL-TV several years ago. Forced to divest himself of one of his D.C. media properties, yet wanting to make the best deal possible, Albritton in 1975 agreed to the groups' demands. Chief among them was that he seek local minority owners for WJLA.

Instead, he sold the station for \$98 million—the largest sale in TV history—to Combined Communications of Phoenix, AZ.

In response, the community groups filed a petition with the FCC in August to deny the transfer, charging that Albritton failed to live up to the agreement, and that he is "trafficking" in stations. In September, Washington Star Communications, Inc., Albritton's organization, made its reply before the FCC. The matter now awaits final disposition.

**Satellite Art:** The Center for New Art Activities, (93 Grand Street, N.Y.C. 10013) presented a two-way satellite transmission between New York City and San Francisco Bay. It was in fixed orbit at 116 degrees longitude west and was comprised of Digital/voice/video elements. The project by Keith Sonnier, Liza Bear and others took place on Sept. 10 and 11 was directly relayed to Manhattan Cable TV Public Access Channel D through the Live Injection Point of the Franklin Street Arts Center from San Francisco Cable 22 and 24 through Archdiocese of San Francisco.

**Bio-arts:** The Bio-Arts Laboratory is an interdisciplinary project examining the development of sensory communication beyond the normal audio-visual capacity including infrared image conversion, healing processes, thermal energy transfer between living systems. The group is producing a series of videotapes and live performances that present their findings, as well as offer professional services. Contact Richard Lowenberg, 3101 Washington St., San Francisco, CA 94115. (415-346-2466).

**Southern Baptist Convention,** representing 35,000 churches and a membership of 13 million, has recently begun a campaign called "Help For Television Viewers." The packet includes a series of pamphlets—"How Television Affects Us," "What Churches Can Do," "What Families Can Do," "Resources for Study and Action," and a sticker for your television set, immediate reaction cards to be sent to the networks. They also provide a survey form for evaluating television programs.

The primary criteria in evaluating programs is to determine what is "positive programming" that is morally responsible, and "negative programming," those

programs that violate the basic principles of morality, encourage immorality or are offensive to morally sensitive people. Two examples of "positive programming" that they cite are *The Waltons* and *Little House on the Prairie*. Write: Christian Life Commission, Southern Baptist Commission, 460 James Robertson Parkway, Nashville, Tenn. 37219.

**The Christian Broadcasting Network** (CBN with 140 TV affiliates, and 120 radio affiliates has recently built an earth receiving station and signed a six-year agreement for 24-hour domestic satellite services with RCA. CBN is also developing an international communications center which will teach radio and television broadcasting to students from Third World countries and Europe.

**PBS watchdogs:** California Friends of Public Broadcasting (PO Box 36144, Los Angeles, CA 90036) joins the Committee to Save KQED in trying to focus public attention on the operations of the state's two largest public TV stations. Principle activity has been to support state bill bringing public broadcasting into the sunshine law governing other state supported agencies.

**TV sound stinks,** said Linda Ronstadt at one time. the FCC may change Linda's tune with its inquiry into stereo TV. Begun this summer, the commission wants to determine whether the public and the broadcasters will spring for it, cash-wise. A feasible system for transmitting stereo is another problem. But WCVB-TV in Boston has been testing stereo TV the past year, so some data will be coming in. Foreign language translation, and augmented audio for the blind are two additional benefits.

**National Gay Task Force** petitioned the FCC to include gay organizations in its list of community groups stations must include in ascertainment process. Currently 19 groups are required, including women's, minority and ethnic, business, labor, and religious. 143 male and female homosexual groups from 49 states and D.C. joined NGTF in filing petition in August.

**Portapak Associates** is a new group designed to bring together individuals concerned with producing and releasing 1/2" video. Contact Dorinda Hoarty, 30 Cornelia St., Suite 18, NYC 10014. (212) 675-2511.

**Portable Channel** is accepting applications for 3-6 month unpaid apprenticeships in 1/2" portable video. Details: David Rose, Portable Channel, 8 Prince St., Rochester, NY 14607.

**Global Village:** Beginning Oct. 15, Global Village will offer free Friday night weekly workshops at 7 p.m. in their NY loft featuring visiting artists and others who have materials to share with the public. Hands-on video lessons will also be featured. Global will also begin twice monthly screenings of prominent documentaries beginning in Oct. Applications for guest artists grants are now being accepted, made possible by NY State Council support. (454 Broome St., NY 10013. 212-966-7526)

**Talent Needed:** Noumenon Visual and Performing Artists are looking for talent for their multimedia public presentations. Background with children is necessary. Send one page resume, slides, videos, etc. to The Artery 181 Main St. Danbury, Connecticut. 06810 w/S.A.S.E. or signify if Noumenon can keep your materials on file.



Martha Stuart (back of head to camera, right) communicates with a group of household technicians in the studio.

PHOTO: MARTHA STUART COMMUNICATIONS

## SOFTWARE

### Gay Festival, New Tapes, All About TV

This *Software* column lists new tapes in production or distribution, details of program activities, festivals and exhibits, tapes sought and offered. *Software* items are not reviews, and *TELEVISIONS* is not endorsing any program listed here. Instead, we offer the space for information exchange about work in the field. If you wish to inform our readers, our next deadline is Nov. 15.

**Gay video festival:** An audience of 250 viewed some 20 videotapes during the first San Francisco Gay Video Festival held for three days in June. Widely varied in style and subject matter, the tapes were made by both gay men and lesbians.

Organizer N.A. Diamon was surprised that "most of the entries, even when presenting gay subject matter, were done for a non-gay audience." The majority of tapes entered were from the West Coast, although a large group from Europe were unable to be shown because sponsors didn't have European standard equipment. A panel of local gay videomakers selected the 20 from a total of 30 tapes submitted.

Six of the tapes have been packaged into two 90-minute programs which are now available for showing around the country. Sponsors are already planning a second festival, hopefully with more entries. For details or info about the traveling exhibit, write: San Francisco Gay Video Festival, The Antares Foundation, 631 Castro St, SF CA 94114. (415) 861-6679.

**Abortion tapes:** "Video Informed Consent-First Trimester Abortion" is a videotape being distributed by McGraw-Hill. The tape is used to explain the benefits and risks involved in abortion prior to the actual surgical procedure. A booklet accompanies the tape that reviews the material in the tape—using monitor shots for recall. The tape can be previewed. Write: McGraw-Hill, Institute for Continuing Patient Education, 4530 West 77th Street, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55435.

Preterm Institute, Newton, Mass. has produced a series of six videotapes to train abortion counselors. The tapes use six individual abortion counseling interviews followed by discussion and analysis. The tapes are available through: Blue Hill Educational Systems, 52 South Main Street, Spring Valley, N.Y. 10977. Preview material costs \$35.00

"Television as if people mattered" is how Martha Stuart describes her series, *Are You Listening?*, 31 videotapes she has produced over the last seven years with millions she has raised, despite her fierce independence and commitment to causes. Faces you see are most often those of the underrepresented on TV, like the household workers pictured above. Other groups with something in common—cops, gangs, women in management, villagers, etc.—spend hours in a studio with Stuart, a trained psychologist, and reveal their own extraordinary realities. The final edits are seamless and broadcast quality. Nonetheless, PBS has declined to run the series, although two shows did run in 1975.

While dealing with PBS, Stuart launched a one-person attack on the rule that limits independents from gaining direct access to the network. In June, after months of meetings, the PBS Board endorsed a slight policy change, placing the authority of deciding whether an indy can bypass stations in the hands of PBS staffers. With it came a statement about the need to develop program capability within stations, but allowing that "the public television system seeks to attract and encourage the development of new talent and a diversity of programming ideas." No test of the policy has yet been made.

Stuart's work is available directly from her at 66 Bank St., NYC.

**WNET's TV Lab:** In addition to any documentaries which are produced by the TV Lab as a result of the new Ford/NEA Fund, several projects are currently underway or completed: *Dr. Behrhorst in Guatemala* by Skip Blumberg, a portrait of a doctor who has devoted his life to working with the Cakchikel Indians of Guatemala; *Pamplona in July* by Esti and Bill Marpet about a Brooklyn man who returns to Spain for the 12th year to "run with the bulls"; *Rite of Passage* by Theresa Mack and Mario Iano, about several children's lives as they pass from elementary school to junior high; *HDM* by Stefan Moore and Claude Beller, about Riker's Island and the criminal justice system.

Downtown Community TV's documentary called *Health Care: Your Money or Your Life* is an hour scheduled on PBS for Nov. 22.

*VTR*, the omnibus anthology of video work, will run as six new "mini" specials on PBS Monday nights starting in October. The programs include new work by Ed Emshwiller (*Sur Faces*), Arthur Ginsberg (the staging of Allen Ginsburg's *Kaddish*), videofilm artist/ animator Eli Noyes; and a half-hour William Wegman program.

**All About TV** is a series on WNYC-TV, Channel 31, New York, entering its ninth season this fall with distribution expanded to the Eastern Educational Network (EEN). The talk show is a forum for guests from within and outside television to discuss all sides of the industry with an emphasis on public-interest issues. The series has provided broadcast exposure for many independent videotapes and films including premieres of DeAntonio's *In the Year of the Pig* and the German film critique of American television by Schulv-Keil, *Kojak and Company*.

This year *All About TV* received an NEA grant to upgrade the show and pay additional staff. Producers include: Steve Scheuer, who is also the show's host, Amy Angelis and Sylvia Robbins. They plan to repackage some of the past shows for college distribution. At the present time, the producers remain open to programming suggestions from producers and media activists in the field.

**The Media Distribution Centre** is collecting audiovisual materials for the enhancement of the learning experience of students, centering on specific people, events, and issues. Examples include Canadian studies, the middle ages, waste water treatment and the grievance arbitration process. For more information contact: Media Distribution Centre, Distribution Department, 121 St. George Street, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1A1 (416) 978-6511.

**SF screenings:** "Illuminations" is a free monthly video presentation in Optic Nerve's San Francisco loft space. With partial support from an NEA grant, the Nerve is inviting video makers (especially social documentarians) to submit work for consideration. \$100 is paid to artists who appear with their tapes. Rental fees are provided when tapes are used for the programs. For details about future programs or information about bookings contact: Optic Nerve, 141 Tenth St, SF CA 94103. (415) 861-4385. Alternate Wednesdays 1/2" tapes are screened in SF at La Mabelle Gallery, 70 12th St. (415) 431-7524.

**"Workfare-How Fair?"** is a tape produced by the Massachusetts Coalition Against Workfare. The tape presents an overview of workfare's dangers and the broad opposition to it. (Under Workfare, welfare recipients will be forced to do free labor for the state in order to remain eligible for benefits.) The tape is available for \$12 from the Massachusetts Coalition Against Workfare, 2 Park Square, Boston, Mass. 02116.

**Sound:** 1977 edition of the Roundup Records catalog features a large selection of jazz, blues, bluegrass and the obscure. The prices in this mail-order only record company are reasonable and the service good. Updates to the catalog which include reviews are published several times a year. Send 25¢ to: Roundup Records, Box 474, Somerville, Ma. 02144.

**"Porn Free: Where Does The Buck Stop?"** is a half-hour documentary on Rochester N.Y.'s attempt to restrain pornography. Produced by Portable Channel, the tape explored first amendment porn protection, pornography as a threat to decent life, and pornography as a sexist tool against women. Write: Portable Channel, P.O. Box 21, Rochester, NY 14601.

**PTL offerings:** Public Television Library in D.C. is offering several new tapes for rent or purchase—for direct, non-commercial use. Ron Kanter and Andrew Dintenfass' documentary on the Dawson Five trial in Georgia heads the list, which includes: "Teton: Decision and Disaster;" "These Faces I've Seen;" "Spoleto: The Festival of Two Worlds;" and "A New Generation: Shades of Gray." For more info: PTL, 475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW, DC 20024, (202) 488-5220.

**"Showdown at the Hoedown"** is a documentary by Blaine Dunlap and Sol Korine that tells the story of the Smithville (Tenn.) Music Jamboree. It was edited at Georgia Educational Television, premiered on Tennessee PTV stations last summer, and has been purchased by CPB for national PBS airing. (No air date was available at deadline). The color show was edited from 25 hours of 3/4" cassette material produced in cooperation with a large number of Southern video producers, including Broadside TV and Mountain Video. Contact: Blaine Dunlap, Rte 2, Box 13, Whitleyville, TN 38588.



Edwin Hartman in the television studio, Ricker College, Houlton, Me. is a participant in the Elderhostel Program which organizes innovative resident classes for senior citizens on campuses.

PHOTO: ELDERHOSTEL, DURHAM, N.H.

**TV Images:** At the Intuitiveye Gallery (641 Indiana Avenue, D.C.) photographer W. Koupsew is featured in an exhibition of images from commercial TV which express one photographer's attitude toward "video stills." The photos are a collection of public figures—Elizabeth Ray, Nixon, Billy Graham and a series of slides of commercials. Koupsew says, "... TV is the most 'passive' medium. ... But with careful watching and reasonable skill in timing, one is finally in a position to preserve specific moments of one's own choosing." Most of the photos are straightforward moments except for the short series of Billy Graham done with contact sheets (edges burned in). They made a piece with more cohesiveness than any of the other single TV photos.

## Media Grantees

The following grants were logged by *TELEVISIONS* staff during the past three months. If you would like to announce your grant to the field, send it to us at the *Survival Department*.

\$125,000 from the Ford Foundation to Georgetown University Law Center to conduct 12 seminars on TV selling to Children.

\$75,000 from the Ford Foundation to the Council on Children, Media and Merchandising to study the effects of television advertising on children.

\$455,753 from the Sarah Scaife Foundation to George Washington University to establish a prototype regional outlet for the television news tape collection at Vanderbilt University.

\$5,000 from the Hazen Foundation to National Wilmington 10 Defense Committee, D.C. for film on the Wilmington 10.

\$5,000 from the Hazen Foundation to Woodie King Associates, NYC, NY for a film on the black theatre movement from 1958 to the present.

\$63,629 from the Kellogg Foundation to Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill., to disseminate results of Foundation aided faculty development project using video vignettes.

# WNET Wins Ford/NEA Independent Doc Fund

## Plus: Film Fund, CPB, government AV regs, Handicapped

By NICK DE MARTINO

The much-anticipated \$500,000 fund to support the work of independent film and video documentarians for public TV has been awarded to WNET-TV's Television Laboratory, it was announced Sept. 15 by the two sponsors, the Ford Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts Media Arts Program.

Each provided \$250,000 for the one-year pilot program which was formally launched by the Lab's Executive Director, David Loxton, on October 1.

According to the proposal submitted to the selection panel that met on July 15 to pick a winner from some 25 hopefuls, WNET will grant a total of \$423,000 to independent documentarians during the Fund's first year of operation—"not a lot of money, you must admit," noted Loxton. "Anyone can do the arithmetic and see that we will be lucky to fund eight or nine projects."

While guidelines and procedures were still being firmed up at *TELEVISIONS* deadline, Loxton says he is aiming toward an application deadline of mid-December.

At that point the proposals will be evaluated by the advisory panel including Chloe Aaron of PBS, Cliff Frazier of Third World Cinema, filmmaker Claudia Weill, and Fred Wiseman, Edith Zornow of Children's TV Workshop, and WNET programming VP Robert Kotlowitz.

Loxton will travel to four or five cities to explain and promote the fund to independents. The first meeting has been set for Oct. 19 in New York. (see *Calendar*)

"People who are interested should send us a letter asking to be put on the list for guidelines," he said, "not to send proposals."

An estimated 75% of the total grant monies will be allocated during the initial panel meeting, with most of it going to new projects. No matching requirement exists for these grants, although projects with funding from other sources are welcome and "would make our money go farther," said Loxton. While there is no budget ceiling for projects, the "sample production budget breakdown" submitted to the sponsors allocated one grant of \$100,000, one of \$70,000, two each of

\$50,000, \$40,000, and \$25,000. Loxton told us that even one \$100,000 project might be too much for such a limited fund.

The remainder of the money not granted in December would go toward step-up and completion grants, probably during an April grant cycle.

The Ford Foundation and NEA called a meeting of independents and others in June, 1976, to announce their intentions of inaugurating the new fund which would be exclusively for independent documentarians. After a series of meetings and one round of grants, the entire process began again this year. Last year only six applicants sought to administer the Fund, primarily because the funders had required applicants to match the half-million dollars. No public TV stations applied.

By contrast the Corporation for Public Broadcasting inaugurated a \$1 million fund earlier this year, financing 10 projects by May. The CPB Fund was open to both stations and independents.

Loxton has hired Kathy Kline, formerly of Artists-in-the-Schools Program and a long-time NEA program officer to actually operate the day-to-day project.

As to the video-film breakdown of grants, much would depend on the quality of the proposals. However, the panel is somewhat weighted toward film, because the TV Lab's principal experience has been in the small-format video field. While video makers will not be required to do post-production at WNET's facilities, "we must be sure an artist can bring the project up to the increasingly stiff PBS and FCC technical requirements," said Loxton.

When guidelines are finalized and distributed, Loxton anticipates that the procedures will be very simple—a two-page project description at most, with a one-page budget, brief outline of staff and principal artist, description of technology, and a sample of previous work.

To be placed on the mailing list or to find out if Loxton will be setting up a meeting in your region contact: Ford/NEA Documentary Fund, Television Lab, WNET-TV, 356 W. 58 St, NYC 10019. (212) 262-4200.

\$250,000 from the Astor Foundation to Educational Broadcasting Corporation/WNET, NYC, for two pilot programs to precede production of series—"The Meanings of Modern Art."

\$15,000 from the Carnegie Corporation to Martha Stuart Communications to plan television series for parents.

\$88,000 from the California Post Secondary Education Commission to the San Diego Community Video Center and a consortium of educational institutions for public access cablecasting for the elderly.

\$30,855 from the American Medical Association to the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting to support television violence monitoring of the fall 1977 programming.

\$5,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts to La Mabelle Gallery, San Francisco for acquiring videotapes for archives in the areas of video art and art documentation.

\$231,050 from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to Pennsylvania State University to develop a health education program. Videotapes will be developed to help local leaders learn to identify and deal with health care services and issues.

\$25,000 from the Ford Foundation to The Fund for Theatre and Film, NYC, for audiovisual presentations dealing with occupational health and safety for use by workers, unions, and plant management.

\$12,000 from the Ford Foundation to the Eastern Education Network to help establish the Eastern Regional Council for Educational Television, a partnership between educators and broadcasters to develop new applications of television to educational needs.

\$200 million in new money to arts under the new NEA Challenge Grants Program. Three media groups grabbed some of the cash flowing to the symphonies, operas, dance and drama groups. WNET got \$250,000 to build and equip a new broadcast center; WGBH got \$375,000 to finance their Arts Programming Independence Fund, which will in turn fund national programming about the arts; and Global Village got \$80,000 to pay for expansion of its Documentary Video Festival, and current workshops, and to upgrade equipment.

\$129,225 to Black professional women's sorority Delta Sigma Theta, Inc. from CPB, for awareness/audience development project aimed at increasing minority interest in public television. Four target cities will be chosen to implement strategies for motivating blacks to become PTV viewers.

\$500,000 to MacNeil/Lehrer report from Allied Chemical, to be split between WNET and WETA to produce the news show. Grant is to bring "new and improved use of film, tape and graphics" to the program. Allied Chemical joins Exxon as a corporate funder of the report.

**Film Fund:** With an estimated total of over \$200,000 for its first year, the newly established Film Fund begins operation this fall. According to Fund staff members, guidelines for film, video and slide programs will be available on November 1, with a grant application deadline of January 15. Grants will be announced April 1. Selections will be made by one of two panels, one that will review proposals from producers east of the Mississippi and one for those in the West. The Fund will have two deadlines per year, the second being planned for September 1st.

There are likely to be more films funded than tapes or slide shows, since a principle criterion is the method of distribution. The Fund's organizers are giving emphasis to programs which are not aimed primarily at public TV audiences. Hence, the distribution plan is an important part of any proposal.

While grants will be made for research, pre-production, and production phases of projects, two-thirds of the first year's grants will be reserved to complete, edit or distribute programs. Maximum grant is \$25,000. Typical grant will be \$5,000 to \$20,000.

The Film Fund has been organized primarily by filmmakers and film backers who have been working for social change. Some board members are associated with foundations which have found it difficult to evaluate film and media proposals, even though they might wish to contribute.

Hence, the new fund will provide a place for producers who want to use film, video or slides for social change to go—not only for money but for advice in funding, distribution, promotion, etc. Staff member Miles Mogulescu, himself co-producer of *Union Maids*, emphasized the service aspect of the project.

In addition, organizers hope that foundations and donors without expertise in evaluating media projects will be willing to trust the collective skills of this project enough to transfer funds for disbursement through The Film Fund.

Producers who wish to submit proposals are strongly urged to contact the Film Fund for guidelines and to talk over the project before submitting a proposal. Rushes are not to be sent unless specifically requested. Contact: The Film Fund, 186 Hampshire St., Cambridge, Mass. 02139. (617) 661-4599.

**CPB Revolving Fund:** Meanwhile, the first two documentaries of ten produced under grants from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's Revolving Documentary Fund will go into the fall public TV Station Programming Cooperative (SPC) in late Oct. The SPC will be a test of the stations' will to back documentaries, since the revenue earned during this market will be put back into the fund for future programs. The two shows are "An Element of Risk", by KCET-TV and "Even the Desert Will Bloom" by WXXI-TV.

**Trade group for A-V producers:** Formed to counteract the threat by the Department of Defense to limit audiovisual production to a select 100 contractors a year ago, the Independent Media Producers Association has grown into a Washington trade group actively lobbying on behalf of a wide range of independent producers. Their first battle was won when proposed DoD regs were withdrawn and the Office of Management and Budget took over to draft new, less limiting procedures for media contracting. OMB regs were released for comment July 1 and are available. (See below)

IMPA's 100-odd members include other associations, like the NY-based Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers and International Quorum of Film Producers (IQ), as well as distributors, film production houses, smaller mom-

and-pop operations, some large industrial firms, and many individuals. Fees, while due for a change, are now \$25 individual, \$100 for a group. Contact: Bill Williams, IMPA, 1100 17th Street, N.W., Suite 1000, Washington, D.C. 20036. (202) 466-2175.

**Government A-V regs:** OMB's new proposed regs cover motion pictures contracted by the government—which totaled 1,303 titles in FY 1976, at a cost of \$17,533,846. Three main changes were made at the suggestion of IMPA and other commenters from within the industry: that no restriction be made on the number of firms which can qualify as the government contractors; that criteria will be based on production capability, not capital plant, equipment, and size of investment as DoD had specified; and that qualification would be determined by a newly established Interagency Film Review Board that would view sample work from a producer, not review physical assets.

OMB issued the updated regulations in a memorandum in May. Comments were received in July. Public hearings on the newly revised regs will be held in November; following any revisions they would be published in early 1978 for implementation by the "lead" agency, probably DoD or the General Services Administration.

The rules apply only to film production. Contracting procedures for video (\$11,854,554 worth of outside contracts in FY 76) and audio/mixed media (\$3,738,806) will follow, although the regs will probably resemble the film package that is finally passed.

OMB is also working on the establishment of a new government-wide audiovisual data base, to be housed at the GSA's National Audiovisual Center. This computer-based inventory would list facilities and software for all federal agencies.

For input or further details contact Lester Fettig or Chuck Clark at OMB: (202) 395-3436.

**AV Management study:** Meanwhile, the White House Office of Telecommunications Policy, which is a casualty of the Carter reorganization plan, has hired a consultant to examine federal agencies management system for financing audiovisual materials. The first phase of the study, due in November, will be delivered by consultant Robert Lissit to Barry Jagoda, President Carter's media advisor. Lissit has reviewed every cabinet-level department and a number of other agencies like Action, EPA and NASA for procedures for AV selection, criteria, administration, distribution, audience and effectiveness.

**HEW's Bureau of Education** for the Handicapped Media Services Office gave 31 media projects a total of \$3.4 million to serve the needs of the handicapped and those working with this population. Of the general audience grants made were: \$120,000 to La Luz Cinema Video of L.A., a minority-oriented business which will do 12 five-minute spots on handicapped achievers, and \$150,000 to Dick Farr, an individual handicapped producer from San Francisco, to produce the pilot of a series called "Just Like Everybody Else". \$120,000 was granted to WGBH-TV to test language levels with captioned children's television programming.

**The Foundation Center** has a new publication which lists foundations that make grants to individuals. Over 1000 foundations are profiled and a detailed description of the kinds of programs they funded is given. (The Foundations included made grants to over 40,000 individuals totalling more than 56 million in the year profiled.) Prepayment is required. Send \$13 to: The Foundation Center, 888 Seventh Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10019.

# Winn's Pop Paranoia Deserves an Answer

## TV's power is her villain

By RON SUTTON

*The Plug-In Drug* by Marie Winn (NY: Viking Press, 1977) Hardback \$8.95.

*The Plug-In Drug* is a provocative book, easy to criticize but hard to dismiss. Marie Winn's thesis is that the act of watching television, regardless of content, can be addictive. She is especially concerned about the effect of excessive television viewing on young children.

After a brief, negative discussion of the television experience—broadcast television is all Winn knows and considers—she turns to such areas as verbal and non-verbal thought, reading, violence and aggression, play, family life, free time and "hooked" parents. I don't think I've ever read an author who linked so many modern ills to the television tube.

And she finds plenty of support in her references, which are selective and uneven. She quotes with equal force from studies and writings of the fifties and the seventies. Even the old Himmelweit study of 1958 is noted, and that was done in England twenty years ago!

Her idea of field research is to go to the playgrounds of Denver and New York and ask some parents and children she finds there what they think of television. Or she suggests that persons who are upset with their children's reaction to television write to her. She also throws in some lengthy home interviews and peppers the text with anonymous quotations from all the unanimously anti-television persons she consulted. This methodology hardly yields statistically valid or an objective position. It does, however, forcefully give one woman's view, backed up by anecdotal reportage that is cogently and clearly presented.

A number of her points raise quite valid issues. Broadcast television can soak up too much of our time. It is a powerful medium—almost too powerful to ignore—due to its colorful moving visuals, its variety of sounds and its easy availability in our living room. We do need to establish some priorities in relation to television viewing. We need to use television and not let television use us—or as is Winn's fear—our children. Talking with children and young people and setting some limits about what they are experiencing in watching tv, would help them fit television into their world, not let it become their world.

Even conceding this, I'm not at all certain that Marie Winn's "Chicken Little" hysteria adds much in the way of insight into the television problem. She is too frightened by television and too imprecise in her criticism. For example, she complains that television viewing is physically passive. Well, a person reading a book looks strangely passive to me—ditto for meditation, praying and playing chess. Physical passivity has little to do with what goes on in an attentive mind. Winn frequently cloaks her anti-television rhetoric in such flimsy material.

Her discussion of the left and right hemispheres of the brain—verbal vs. nonverbal—reveals her true bias for print as the only valid medium of learning and art. She is verbal, views events linearly, is committed to high culture. Anything, like television, that seems to threaten these bastions of Western civilization is ugly, barbaric and destructive. Like Innes and McLuhan, when she is self-confident about the impact on our society of moving image and sound, she can be challenging and provocative. When she be-

comes self-righteous, she is unbearably absurd:

"In his television experiences the child returns to that comfortable, atavistic passivity that was once his right and that he must now renounce if he is to become a functioning member of society. It is only while he watches television that he is freed of the risks of real life." (p. 175)

One almost wants to prescribe medication for her "future shock" when one reads such reactionary and outrageous statements which frequent the book.

This is the tragedy of Marie Winn's presentation. She is an educated person, a graduate of Radcliffe and Columbia University and a successful author of ten books for parents and children. But she is a visual and media illiterate. Marie Winn does not understand nor does she appreciate one little bit the artistry, value, and impact of moving images and sound in our society. Her fearful reaction is to suggest pulling the plug. She echoes the voices of countless mothers and fathers down through the centuries who were convinced that radio, movies, comic books, pulps, theaters and novels would rot their children's minds and bring civilization down around their heads.

Winn is scared and alarmed. She's done something to exercise that fear: she's written a book that points an accusing finger at the one-eyed monster in our homes. No doubt about it, television is her supreme villain, her bogeyman, her dragon to be slayed. She advances an oversimplified, unenlightened, visually uninformed argument, but it's popular and current and demands an answer. Media education and literacy are one possible reply. But that antidote needs developing in an article or book of its own.

**Ron Sutton is Assistant Professor of the Visual Media Program at The American University in Washington, D.C.**

**TV and the Left:** Left publications are beginning to review and discuss television on a regular basis. The *Guardian* has been increasing its television coverage, both reviewing programs and commentary. Recent issues have reviewed the PBS series, "The Age of Uncertainty" with John K. Galbraith; "Washington Behind Closed Doors" and an article on "Eyewitness News" by Tim Patterson. A subscription is \$15/year. Write: *Guardian*, 33 W. 17th St., NYC, NY 10011.

"Television without Tears: An Outline of a Socialist Approach to Popular Television" is an article by Daniel Ben-Horin appearing in the Sept./Oct. 1977 issue of *Socialist Revolution*. A subscription is \$12/year. Write: *Socialist Revolution*, 396 Sanchez St., San Francisco, Ca. 94114.

**Field of Vision**—edited by R.A. Haller and John Burchfield. A publication of Pittsburgh Film-Makers, a center for the making, study and exhibition of cinema, video and photography. Summer issue contains an extensive article on Stan Brakhage with bibliography. P.O. Box 7200, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15213. Single copies \$1.



PHOTO: STEVEN SCHOENBAUM

**Self-distribution** of your film, from A to Z, is the subject of an excellently organized and written 76-page handbook called *Doing it Yourself*. Written by Julia Reichert, independent filmmaker (*Growing Up Female*, *Union Maids*, etc.) and co-founder of the New Day Film Cooperative, the handbook has been published by the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (99 Prince St., NYC 10012). Even though most of the details apply specifically to film, the book is extremely useful for videomakers who want to gain wider exposure.

**Argentine:** The Buenos Aires Art and Communication Center (CAYC) began in 1968 with an exhibition called "Art and Cybernetics", and has performed a variety of functions in the art world, bringing artists and work from throughout the world to Argentina, helping establish a network of exhibits in Latin America, and promoting Argentine artists elsewhere. A booklet describing their work, as well as an interesting paper called "Rhetoric of Art and Technology in Latin America" by Jorge Glusberg (delivered at the International Institute of Communications meeting in Sept.) are available from CAYC, Elpidio Gonzalez 4070, 1407 Buenos Aires, Argentina. CAYC has been very active in video-art, both regionally and internationally.

**The US Civil Rights Commission** says TV's portrayal of women, and the TV industry's EEO record stinks. A 181-page report, "Window Dressing on the Set: Women and Minorities in Television," blames the networks for continuing the stereotypes. Also in for attack is the FCC, for allowing both the programs, and the practices, that foster discrimination.

The study includes statistics on how often white males appear on the screen—65.3% of major and minor characters, 85% of all newscasters—and what kind of employment records the stations have. The report also makes recommendations for correcting the gross discrimination it now sees so visible. For the report, write the U.S. Civil Rights Commission in Washington, D.C.

**State of the Arts** is a newsletter available free that deals with arts related funding and legislation in California. It's available from: Cultural News Service, 452 I Street, Sacramento, Ca. 95814.

**International info:** The International Institute of Communications, formerly the International Broadcast Institute, is a private international organization that sponsors meetings and publications for the new class of media academics and professionals. Its international conference was held for the first time in the U.S. in early September with co-sponsorship by PBS, CPB and NPR. Proceedings will eventually be published in book form. In the meantime, excerpts and summaries will be presented in the IIC's excellent bimonthly *Intermedia* (which is useful to keep track of research reports and trends, conferences and multi-national meetings). For the cost of xeroxing, IIC will also send you copies of the papers delivered in Washington, and a list of what's available. (Write IIC, Tavistock House East, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9LG, Great Britain).

**Afterimage** is publication of the Visual Studies Workshop that attempts to deal with all aspects of picture-making. Published ten times a year, Sept. through June. Includes film, photography, video and related media. \$12 per year in the U.S., \$14 elsewhere. 4 Elton Street, Rochester, New York 14607.

**New media law journal: COMM/ENT** is the name of a new law journal exclusively devoted to communications and entertainment law. Under the direction of Roscoe L. Barrow and Neil Boorstyn, faculty of the Hastings College of Law at the University of California, COMM/ENT has a student editorial staff. The journal will feature articles and a digest summarizing recent cases and other law journal articles in the field. Write: 198 McAllister St., San Francisco, CA 94102.

**Art Communication Edition. #7 Behavior** is published by the Centre for Experimental Art and Communication of Toronto. #7 has articles pertinent to the realization of its Behavior School as a series of performances and workshops on/of behaviour as a central issue with the following operators: Arnulf Rainer, Peter Dunn, Loraine Leeson, Lukasz Pyrq, Ron Gillespie and others. \$7 a year for 8 issues. Single copies 50¢ Art Communication Edition, Supervision Publications, 15 Duncan St. Toronto, Canada M5H 3H1.

**India's Satellite:** "The Social Use of India's Television Satellite: A Technology Assessment of the INSAT Proposal" is detailed, scientific and very hard—hitting appraisal of the Indian satellite system, which would argue against the continuation of such programs (nonetheless, India has just decided to go ahead with its own domestic satellite). This report is unique because it combines investigative reporting with the methodology and tools of a trained economist. From: Center for Economic Research, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Scheuchzerstrasse 68, CH-8006 Zurich, Switzerland. \$10 U.S.

**NABET:** The principal broadcast union offers "Penalties on Documentary Productions", a summary of work rules by Local 15 in NY (165 W. 46th, NYC 10036, Suite 900. 212-869-0800).

**Arts study:** "A Bulletin on Federal Economic Programs and the Arts" by Carl Stover is available free from: Deidre Frontczak, National Endowment for the Arts, Mail stop 650, Washington, D.C. 20506. The study was done as part of the cultural resources development project.

**The Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press** has published its first book titled: *Women in Media: A Documentary Sourcebook*. The book is a series of documents from 1790 to the present, each with a short introduction giving its historical context. Included are: Mary Catherine Goddard—"Petition to Senate", Ruth Crane—"Early Days in Broadcasting" and Anne Royall—"Political Journalism."

There have been a couple of rather slick, expensive books about women in television (Barbara Walters, etc.) which have pretty much ignored the history of women in media and women in media of the future. This book is an important resource for schools and libraries and women. It is also very cheap. Send \$5.95 to Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press, 3306 Ross Place, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008. (Special rates when more than one copy is ordered)

Request information on the Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press, from the same address. They are involved in a number of projects including coverage of International Women's Year national conference in Houston, media distribution by women, and a study currently of foundation grants to women's media.

**Young Viewers:** A new publication aimed at professionals in the field of children's media is soliciting manuscripts that offer critical evaluation of films, tapes and television programs designed for children under 14. In addition to child-made media, Young Viewers will review books or papers on media education and production. For style sheet or sub information write Maureen Gaffney, 43 W. 61 St., NY, NY 10023. *Young Viewers* is a project of the Media Center for Children.

**Sightlines:** The winter 77-78 issue of *Sightlines* will focus on video use in schools and libraries. Educational Film Library Association, 43 W 41st NYC, 10023.

**Co-evolution Quarterly**, the successor to Whole Earth Catalog, will be publishing a special issue on communication this winter.

**Image Quality:** For doubters, the technical minds at RCA have published comprehensive comparison between image quality of video signals and 35mm film images. The video holds up by all standards. Write for Image Quality: A Comparison of Photographic and Television Systems, by Otto H. Schade, Sr., RCA Labs, Princeton, N.J. 08540.

## CALENDAR

Sept. 2-Oct. 2: Selections from the Southland Video Anthology. An exhibition organized by David Ross for the Long Beach Museum of Art. At Everson Museum, Syracuse, N.Y.

Sept. 16-Oct. 16: Jamie Davidovich video, using the entire museum as a field and relating its scale to the television screen. Everson Museum, Syracuse, N.Y.

Sept. 21-Oct. 30: Exhibit of videotapes by Max Almy, including "Form and Concept", a multiple monitor piece. San Francisco Museum of Art.

Oct. 5-8: International Film Producers of America annual meeting and "Cindy" awards.

Oct. 7-9: Artists TV Lab Invitational Video Exposition '77, Rinebeck, N.Y. Including Bruce Kurtz, WGBH's Betsy Connors, Alan & Susan Raymond, works by John Orentlicher, Gary Hill, Ernest Gusella, and West Coast Artists.

Oct. 10: Ed Emshwiller's "Family" (1975) at Pittsburgh Filmmakers.

Oct. 9-14: NAVA Audio-Visual Institute for Effective Communications. Indiana University. Bloomington, Indiana.

Oct. 11-13: Video Expo, Madison Square Garden, NYC. Workshops, Seminars, Trade Show. Sponsor: Knowledge Industry Publications.

Oct. 19: First regional meeting by WNET Television Lab to explain the new Ford/NEA Independent Documentary Fund, co-sponsored by Foundation for Ind. Video and Filmmakers and NY Film Council. Great Hall, Cooper Union, 7 pm, NYC.

Oct. 20-21: Second meeting of Carnegie Commission on the Future of Public Broadcasting, in Washington, D.C.

Oct. 20-21: Copyright and Educational Telecommunications conference, Reno. Sponsored by Information Futures, 2217 College Station, Pullman, Washington, 99163.

Oct. 28-29: NAVA Materials Council Software Sales Conference. Villa Hotel, San Mateo, California.

Oct. 26-27: Home Video Systems Seminar, NYC. Marketing of new video-tape and disc products by International Tape Association, 10 W. 66 St., 212-787-0910.

Oct. 28-Nov. 6: Bart Robbett's first New York exhibition. Installation pieces "Double Narrative", performances "Word Burn" and other works which utilize the mediums of film, video and light. Whitney Museum.

Nov. 1: Deadline for submitting papers to Conference on Visual Anthropology, to be held March 1978. Contact: Jay Ruby, COVA, Dept. of Anthropology, Temple University, Phila., Pa. 19122.

Nov. 1: Deadline for new production grants (up to \$50,000), National Endowment for the Arts, Media Arts Division.

Nov. 2: World Future Society conference on Communications and Society: Policies for the Plannable Future. At the Ford Foundation, NYC. WFS, 4916 St. Elmo Ave., DC 20014

Nov. 15-20: Ant Farm, "Media Burn; "About Media", Anthony Ramos; "The Nixon Tapes", Elon Soltes. Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC.

Nov. 17: Chicago Film Festival, including industrial commercial film/video awards.

Nov. 16-19: International Videodisc/Home Video Programming Conference, Loeb Conference Facility, NY University. (Write: P.O. Box 102, Cooper Station, NY, NY 10003. 212-982-5244.)

Nov. 18-20: West Coast Women's Video Festival. Sponsored by the Women's Communications Coalition. This festival will show video by West Coast women in specially designed environments at the San Francisco State University, Studio One, Creative Arts Building.

Nov. 29-Dec. 1: Conference on CTS satellite. Royal Society of Canada, Canadian Dept. of Communications, NASA. National Library, Ottawa. 613-992-3468.

Dec. 7-9: National Conference on Public Policy and the Arts. Walters Art Gallery, 1600 N. Charles, Baltimore, MD. 21201. For pre-registration, contact Edward P. McCracken at the museum.

Dec. 15: "100th Anniversary of Recorded Sound" on NBC-TV.

Dec. 20-24: Martha Rosler. "Vital Statistics of a Citizen, Simply Obtained", (1977); "Semiotics of the Kitchen" (1975). "The East is Red, The West is Bending", (1977), "From the PTA, The High School, and the City of Del Mar", (1977); "Losing: A Conversation with the Parents" (1977), 94 minutes. Whitney Museum. NYC.

Jan. 1: Deadline for proposals in NEA's Media Arts-General Program category, which includes documentary and narrative artist individual grants.

Trends and key stories in Social Service, Citizen Action, Art, Broadcast TV, Technology, and History.

## BROADCAST TV

## Lessons in Viewer-Sponsored TV

Studying ten years of LA's late KVST-68

By KIM WEIR and JOHN HUNT

Channel 68 has been dark for over two years. The studio has new tenants. Most of the hardware is in HEW receivership—as well as used, we hear at PBS affiliate KCET, Channel 28. The Board of Directors hasn't reconvened in months. It seems that all is said and done for Channel 68. Or is it?

Channel 68 took root in Los Angeles because there was really no media for the community, no access, no real information beyond the nightly news in a metropolis that covers a vast 50-mile territory running from the mountains to the sea. No media despite 12 full-time television stations and TV's master, the film industry, as well as numerous radio stations, commercial production houses, and more recently pay-TV Channel 52 and four cable companies, Theta, Hughes, Teleprompter and Warner.

Access in L.A. has been difficult. Committee for Open Media, successful in getting a certain amount of media access in the San Francisco Bay Area ran into a stone wall with LA broadcasters in 1973. KPFF-FM, one of the Pacifica Foundation listener-supported stations has been the only consistent community access to the air waves in the face of violence and vandalism by right-wing groups, harassment by both city and federal law enforcement agencies, red-baiting, court suits and chronic poverty. Theta Cable just last March fulfilled their legal obligation by making public access available to all their subscribers on Channel 3. However, with good reception just about everywhere in the city, cable subscriber-ship and therefore cable public access remains relatively insignificant.

What brought Channel 68 to life was public television, which has only recently been accused of failing to provide community television. The Friends of PBS Channel 28, a new local organization, points out that Channel 28 community programming is down from 5½ to 2½ hours per week. The majority of its local budget goes to advertising or fundraising, and the rest of its hours are filled by either foreign fare (BBC) or PBS network productions. KCET has refused to open its board meetings or its books to the LA community. So much for access.

Ten years ago, however, frustration with public television was reserved to a few liberals. Clayton Stouffer, founder of Channel 68, was one of these. A graduate of Reed College with graduate work in communications at Berkeley, he did a year's stint at KQED, the PBS affiliate in the San Francisco Bay Area.

In 1967 Stouffer headed for a major media market to found one of the nation's first viewer-sponsored community television stations.

Stouffer's idea was simplistic. "I advocate what I have labeled problem-solving journalism where the programming shows the public solutions to problems without dwelling totally on the problems themselves," he said at the time.

Enthusiasm was not too hard to find in the LA community among those who were tired of KCET's brand of community

television. The time was ripe in many ways. The 1960's were demonstrating the power and impact of media in our lives on a daily basis. But money—finding it—was a lot harder.

Local foundations showed no interest in funding KVST. Numerous community groups were called upon for financial aid without a single comer. Even national corporations were approached. Their interest might be stimulated, Stouffer felt, because KVST was willing to air all sides of a debate, including that of big business. But big business wasn't buying.

Nevertheless the non-profit Viewer-Sponsored Television Foundation, Inc., eventually stood before the FCC in 1968 with \$283,000 worth of accumulated donations and loans from individual donors, the Catholic Church, interest-bearing bonds, several out-of-town foundations, the UAW and the Teamsters. Before the FCC even moved to nay or aye the KVST petition, it was blocked. At that time Stouffer was applying for Channel 58. In the next months, and years, he was forced into battle with both KCET who opposed KVST from its inception, and the LA Board of Education, the winner in the dispute, over Channel 58 until Stouffer discovered that Channel 68 was open, the highest frequency available. At last Stouffer filed for a construction permit with the FCC. By this time it was 1972 and new things were happening in the world of video.

## Big hardware vs. small hardware

"Far out! . . . My dream come true . . . a real community station," explained Maurice Jacobsen, a video producer who was brought to LA to help plan production. "So I came out and then I met Clayton (Stouffer) and presented my ideas for the direction that I felt the station should go which was decentralized with putting a lot of technical energy into developing the technical expertise needed to be able to broadcast small format video; to start community programming years before the station went on the air, to be able to build a backlog of community support and a backlog of programming for when the station went on the air; to do a lot of community outreach, to do a massive public campaign to get people involved in programming decisions on the kinds of programming that the station is going to develop, to try to develop collective production teams. All of which was greeted by this look of amazement . . . But this is a television station—this isn't some sort of anarchist freak organization . . . I heard this rap and knew it was not going to succeed . . ." (from a KPFF-FM broadcast, 1975)

While grassroots activity in small format video production sprouted up around the country, Stouffer made plans for a large format network-style color television studio in the very heart of Hollywood. He gradually filled the studio with the usual equipment: three IVC floor cameras, two Ampex 1000 quadruplex VTR's, etc.

The hardware schema did not reflect the well-known technological revolution in video scheduled to hit the market in 1975 when portable ¾ inch color equipment and the first time base corrector would make their appearance. Instead KVST was due for a \$305,000 HEW grant to be used in large part to build a mobile van equipped with large format hardware.

Stouffer had to depend largely upon amateur volunteers. This resulted in endless problems. When Chuck Malone, the station's first professional engineer was finally hired by Stouffer all he could say was: "It's a mess!" Master control had to be reorganized. Relations up on the Mt. Wilson antenna farm had been bungled. This resulted in litigation with Channel 46, the ABC affiliate and three radio stations, leading ultimately to hearings in front of the Regional Planning Commission, the Forest Service and the FCC.

In the delay KVST missed its first air date, causing the loss of a major CPB grant. All told KVST put more than \$150,000 into bailing out of this grief, the sum total of its savings—all of which was earmarked for its first year on the air.

## On the Air: Trouble from the Start

On May 5, 1974 KVST went on the air. Then began a time of strife and labors unequalled in KVST's already rocky history. The station's bank account neared zero as the nation dove into a serious economic recession. Stouffer, unable to buy or attract enough qualified assistance was rapidly becoming an unapproachable autocrat who wanted to do everything himself.

In an effort to improve working relationships and conditions, the heads of each department at the station signed an eleven page document outlining a hiring and firing procedure, job definitions and communications lines to the Board of Directors. Stouffer disregarded the proposal and it was finally shelved by the staff under the stress of other forces.

The station was so poor at that time, the only thing it could do was broadcast live from its studio on Highland Avenue using brigades of dedicated but hastily trained volunteers. And the only thing that the staff could do when it was fed up with Stouffer was to quit.

The KVST Board was miffed. Stouffer had consistently turned a deaf ear to their attempts to provide leadership. In January 1975 Stouffer was voted out of KVST by the same Board of Directors he had hand-picked just months before.

Now the station stepped up its activity. New money—though not much—allowed the station to rent programming for the first time. For the next four months, until March 1975, KVST broadcast PBS and other "canned" shows. Jerry Shore, formerly head of the Pacifica Foundation stepped into Stouffer's place and attempted to draft a new plan of action. In April, 1975 he organized a meeting of representatives from 65 community organizations.

In spite of the fact that the two hundred assembled representatives did not include many of the minority group organizers he had hoped would show, Shore presented the assembly with KVST, "Your community station, for your



ILLUSTRATIONS BY CAROLE PALMER

use, to help your organization, your people..." Shore says he spent two hours trying to convince these people that he wasn't joking, that the financial responsibility wouldn't be outrageous, that the awesomeness of TV was just a blinding mystique.

By June, Shore was convinced that his original proposal, made when he joined KVST—to go dark for a few months of reorganization and fundraising—was still the only path out of financial disaster. With no support for the idea and all else failing, Shore left.

As the station leadership and staff shifted and shook, the onus of responsibility for KVST's livelihood increasingly fell on the shoulders of the Board of Directors. Board members seemed incapable of taking up arms against the station's debt as it rose steadily toward a half a million dollars.

Spirits again ran high when the HEW equipment grant came through. Applying this money to immediate goals, KVST began in March to produce its own programming for the first time. The staff and volunteers labored late into each night at breakneck speed turning out shows. When NABET local 53 attempted to organize the engineers they were called before the new station manager, Hy Freedman, who explained that a union would only be to the detriment of the station's financial situation. The union was voted down. Finally, on advice of counsel, the station manager apologetically asked the staff to default their salaries for some weeks to come so that the utilities could be paid.

Times were grim and the hardships severe. It would be a year on the air in May, yet the *TV Guide* and the *LA Times* were only just beginning to list KVST programming. Theta Cable had taken its time, nearly a year about including Channel 68. Now the head engineer was reporting that the transmitter on Mt. Wilson had been pointed in the wrong direction all along, serving the San Diego area well, while cheating major portions of Los Angeles of good Channel 68 reception. It didn't seem like the situation could get any worse.

### The Board of Directors

The Board of Directors convened a large meeting on KVST's studio floor on Dec. 20, 1975. Present was the entire staff management, volunteer personnel and nearly all of the Board's 40 members. The staff waited anxiously as the Board waded through past business. After defaulting their salaries for periods varying up to ten weeks they had requested this meeting to confront the Board with a resolution: they were no longer willing to underwrite the station's operations and wanted their payrolls, totaling more than \$40,000, brought up to current by the end of January.

In a long and poignant letter to the Board, the staff restated their commitment to KVST and the management but expressed concern about the Board's dedication to their welfare. In-fighting among Board members, the staff had heard, was causing donors to be reluctant with their gifts. Was this true? The staff asked that lines of communication to and from the Board, for months now tenuous or non-existent, be opened.

In spite of the gravity of the staff summons, it stood as only one point on a staggering agenda. In addition, strategy for tackling the station's debt structure, now at \$700,000, was to be engineered. The final item threatened to take the board to the heart of its conflicts: election of an entirely new leadership was due, since all the present leadership were holding office far in excess of the term lengths set forth in the by-laws.

But the Board had only begun handling the staff grievances when the meeting began to take the course of so many

of its meetings in the past. Tempers flared, accusations were leveled, the chair was unable to hold order. The agony and congestion of all of KVST's years suddenly peaked. After six hours important business still lay unresolved. As the meeting adjourned the staff despaired that its needs would ever be attended to even provisionally.

KVST's by-laws say that board membership will be "restricted to socially concerned media professionals and community activists". By the fifth year of operations all but two of the board members were to be elected by the viewer sponsorship. When Stouffer finished assembling his first Board of Directors they included one Indian, several Orientals, a few Blacks and Chicanos. The majority of these people and all of the remaining whites were professionals heavily representing every solid and enduring liberal organization: the local Democratic Party, the ACLU, the NAACP, the Unitarian Church, et al. The concept was to represent Los Angeles's community needs in a microcosm called the Board of Directors. Soon the Board was a microcosm of the conflicts and their histories in Los Angeles left-liberal politics. Although loath to face a fact

Board member and the head engineer, a well-known conservative clashed. The next day the engineers failed to put KVST on the air at 3pm to begin its broadcast day, and left the station: The station, now dark, was fitted with new locks by the station manager, barring all entry. But no one really imagined that KVST would never go back on the air again.

"We went on the air without anything to back us up, hoping to get an immediate response from the community... We were hoping desperately that people would say isn't that interesting that somebody is trying to do that..." (Leslie Parrish, KVST's Director of Development, KPFFK-FM broadcast, 1975.)

As the drama of this community television station unfolded one element rated above even money for being consistently scarce: community support.

Certainly KVST was not unknown. Hundreds of community organizations had been notified repeatedly and many had appeared on the station's shows. And certainly KVST's programming was community-oriented. While the station could hardly produce enough of its own shows to fill 54 weekly hours of air, KVST producers must be credited with the distinction that they were the only ones in

from the wealthier sections of LA, despite the fact that you could sponsor KVST for as little as \$5.00 a year. What happened? Was it the lack of funds, or a boring program format that kept community support at low ebb? Not at all. For had the community felt that a resource like KVST was vital to its functioning it never would have allowed the station to be swallowed by these hardships. What then prevented KVST from becoming part of the community? KVST's doors were, after all, open to everyone. What did KVST's community television really mean?

"The station never claimed to be public access." (Gerry Richman, KVST staff producer, KPFFK-FM broadcast, 1975.)

Although the quote above may seem to contradict KVST's public image it was true in every sense. KVST was unable to provide access to small format independent video producers because the station had no technically suitable way to broadcast 1/2 inch and 3/4 inch tape. In fact, the station was admittedly uninterested in doing so. LA Women's Communications Collective and Luna Video were the only local tape-making groups whose work was broadcast by KVST, a trick accomplished by shooting the tapes off a monitor. One member of the Collective, Janice Yudell, wrote after the station closed, that "Every other week we brought in a few minutes of edited half-inch news and analysis from the community... We felt a mindset existed at the station that our form of production was amateurish and inferior, whereas we felt we were serving as a vital link to the community..."

There could be no active attempt to go out into the community—the hardware prevented that. Nonetheless, many shows solicited telephone calls on the air and literally anyone could walk in to present a program idea to a producer, voice an opinion or just see the place.

But access at KVST, although personalized, did not lead to much programming by smaller communities within the larger metropolis. If the programming idea suggested was too specific, making the audience for it relatively small, it was unlikely to be produced. There was no satisfactory way to notify the special audience and this kind of programming was believed to be financially without returns.

Thus, KVST was no more personalized a communications system than the commercial broadcasters, obliged as they are to appeal to the greatest audience possible. Access on the smaller community level basically had to be dismissed. KVST did provide access to those people who were already equipped and pre-disposed to studying social problems at their broader level, mainly well-educated professionals.

### What Being on TV Meant

All the same, KVST put a lot of people from the LA communities on the air. What did "being on TV" mean at KVST? TV at KVST was produced in the traditional studio style, using the talk-show format.

Access to the airwaves at KVST was being on a talk show. This is a pretty tight set-up—an organized discussion with a host. It featured community and agency representatives, mainly professionals. Negative feedback from the guests was usually frustration at having to fit themselves into this format.

If we add the whole thing up, "community television" at KVST had a dubious existence. Being on TV at KVST meant being plugged into a talk show. Community access was structured in such a way as to naturally encourage it among professionals and discourage it at the grass-roots level. And community programming actually excluded the



that even they themselves deplored, the white liberals of the Board, with several prominent fundraisers among them, clearly had their hands on the most essential form of power at the station: money. Unable to either change or reconcile this reality several minority representatives began to wage emotional warfare on liberal Board members.

By June 1975, Board liberals were so weakened that they accepted the addition to the Board, in a manner illegal according to the by-laws, of four members of the left-wing La Raza Party. Hard-line liberals, summoning their strength, now pushed the election of several big liberal money men. The battle lines were drawn. The La Raza Party had hit its mark. The power base on the Board was elitist by its very nature. La Raza, however, had nothing to offer up in its place, either financially or ideologically. From here on out the Board meeting no longer took care of station business. It was war.

In the days after the Board meeting of December 20, there was talk of a staff strike, Board incompetence and the possibility of violence and vandalism from the Board's left-wing. All was rumor, anger and emotion.

On December 24, 1975 the staff met in the main office and voted narrowly not to strike, while down the hall a La Raza

town to consistently put the issues of Los Angeles on the air, topping everyone else with at least nine hours a week of original community programming.

In addition to public interest specials there were a number of regular series: "The Citizen Intelligenser", after the style of Nadar, kept consumers abreast of legal news and rip-offs. The gamut of women's issues were aired on "Ms. Celiany". "La Raza" featured news from the Latin community in both Spanish and English. "House Call" discussed health care problems and new ways of healing. "Look" interviewed the organizers of coming community events, calendar style. "Strawberry Shortbread" covered issues of education and the black community. Black Awareness in Television produced the Nation of Islam's "Say Brother". "Psychic Phenomenon", featuring guests in the occult and ESP, baffled and irritated social activists at the station by not only becoming the most popular show but the only one to receive money from viewers!

All the same, KVST's programming was a flop. The audience it was intended for was not showing much interest. The station insisted that its content was more relevant to the people's needs than any other station's. Yet the vast majority of the 6,000 plus viewer sponsors came

television made by people themselves, out in the community.

KVST could not pierce the communities' traditional passivity and alienation to mass media with this approach. What was intended as television for the community really became community television without a community.

Shortly after the closing of the station the Board voted on new leadership for KVST. Reverend Edgar R. Edwards, Pastor of the Immanuel United Church of Christ, is now president of the Board. Paul Schrade, labor movement activist, is the Board's chairperson. There are only nine Board members left. In a phone conversation with Reverend Edwards as this article went to press it was learned that KVST would meet in late October. Edwards denies that there's any validity to rumors that Channel 68 will be bought by the Los Angeles County College System. The FCC and HEW are "holding". Rev. Edwards said he is tired, as are the other Board members and wishes only to lay the question of KVST Channel 68 finally and completely to rest.

### Learning From KVST's Mistakes

People are alienated from TV, not just because of content, or lack of it, but because of the basic structure of television itself, which is one-way. KVST may have changed the content of television, but it did not change the essential nature of today's television experience.

People have been conditioned by that media *not* to be able to communicate, *not* to be able to make their own media. In fact, to be unconscious that they have the ability. This alienation began, and continues, by keeping the means of making and distributing media out of the hands of the people, a feat easily achieved because, at one time, the equipment was so expensive and complex.

Although small format, inexpensive, portable video equipment was being introduced in this country at the same time KVST was being developed, Stouffer and others opted for a traditional network equipment and distribution system. The result: KVST was not vital to the community because it did not put the community in the position of overcoming its own alienation, of making its own media.

We are personally convinced that the future of community television in Southern California lies in developing two-way TV. The city of LA is unique. Al-

though it is governed as though it were a single urban entity—due to its freeways—it is actually an unhomogeneous collection of many distinct communities covering one of the largest urban stretches in the world.

We propose a decentralized TV system based on the model by engineer and community communications organizer Allan Fredericksen. He suggests an interconnecting system of small format "narrowcasting systems" which transmit in a five mile radius. These would form the basis for local video production. Each community could produce and view its own television as well as that produced by others in other parts of the city.

In a recent talk with Fredericksen, he said his on-going technological R&D makes small format narrowcasting more realistic than ever. Still, this new communications structure poses as many questions as answers about finances, programming, and work relationships.

We're promoting this discussion since we feel that when community TV in LA lifts its head once again it should not repeat the mistakes of KVST channel 68. We hope the discussion generated will get back to us.

*Thanks to John Baker for help in preparing this article.*

**Kim Weir, a veteran of KVST, is a media activist who works in video and writes educational media for a living. John Hunt is a media activist and a video portrait artist.**

**Allan Fredericksen, 2544 W. Main St., Norristown, PA. 19401**

## Battles of Alternative Broadcasters

By STEVE SPECTOR

The case of a Denver-area VHF allocation illustrates the growing trend of public broadcasters to oppose competition from "alternative" or community broadcasters, many of which got their start in the FM radio movement of the 60s.

Front Range Educational Media Corporation received FCC approval July 29 to build a community TV station in Broomfield, Colorado, to serve the Den-

ver/Boulder metropolitan area. Front Range's Channel 12 was an uncontested frequency. Nonetheless, Denver's educational station KRMA-TV has filed a petition for the FCC to reconsider their approval.

Front Range states its purpose as providing "programming which will offer citizens a source of continuing education", chiefly in the fields of public affairs and politics; science and technology; religion, philosophy, and spirituality; and the arts. Major emphasis will be on local programming in the studio and in the field with portapaks. Non-local programming will come from independent film and video producers, and PBS.

Under the original plan Channel 12 would be on the air by January 29, 1979. Construction will be accompanied by the training of staff and volunteers in production and station management, and to develop community support.

John Schwartz, president of Front Range, has been attacked by the Denver press in what appears as a defensive reaction by the Denver School Board which operates KRMA-channel 6, Denver's PBS station. Spokesmen for Channel 6 allege total duplication of programming, limited funding sources, and Schwartz's lack of professional experience, despite the endorsement which FCC approval carries with it. Furthermore, the Front Range proposals for programming are substantially different than what is already available. The real motive, reasons Schwartz, who was shocked by the personal nature of the attacks against him, seems to be fear of competition for audience and funding sources.

The opposition to Front Range by Channel 6 reflects a pattern of reaction by established educational television groups against alternative forms of non-commercial TV. Tom Thomas, executive director of the National Federation of Community Broadcasters, cites similar cases:

- Double Helix' application for channel 40 in St. Louis, was followed by a competing application from KETC, operator of the PBS station in the area.

- Broadside Video's bid for a frequency in Johnson City, Tenn., faces competition from the state's telecommunications agency.

- Alabama Citizens for Responsive Public Television is competing against the Alabama Educational Television Commission for stations in Birmingham, Montgomery, and Demopolis, in an al-

ready celebrated challenge to traditional non-commercial TV.

The Alabama Citizens for Responsive Public Television has been competing against the Alabama Educational Television Commission (AETC) since July, 1975. Their lawyer, Mark Stein, said that by October the legal actions needed to force the FCC into policy making will have begun, though he could not say how long it will take. In 1974 the FCC lifted the licences from all nine AETC stations, when the broadcasting group was found guilty of racial discrimination and failure to respond to the needs of Alabama's black communities. The subsequent reassignment left the AETC with all but three stations, which the citizens group is seeking.

In contrast to such direct competition, a cooperative arrangement will exist between KOPN-TV, a community broadcaster in Columbia, Mo., and the PBS affiliates in St. Louis and Kansas City. KOPN, operated by New Wave, Inc., will rebroadcast St. Louis programming and serve as a repeater/translator for the signal from the Kansas City PBS station during the station's initial start-up period. This will enable KOPN to develop local audience support, as well as produce a limited amount of its own programming.

In Alamo, Texas, the Federacion de las Organizaciones del los Valles (Federation of the Valley's Organizations) will broadcast a combination of PBS, local and Spanish language programming over channel 44, pending approval of an HEW grant for support of the station.

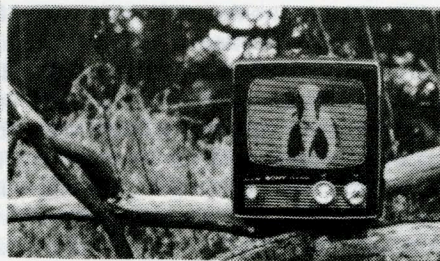
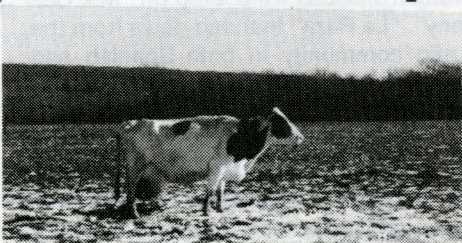
Competition for non-commercial assignments seems to have taken both the FCC and the traditional educational broadcasters by surprise. For the latter, whether they are state agencies, university systems or private, member-supported stations, the challenges become a turf problem, an invasion of a spectrum felt to be their own. An application by an alternative broadcaster for such a frequency is taken as a threat to sovereignty over allocations they often regard as being held in trusteeship. Whether or not there is an active desire for the station, a competing application may be filed as a holding action that can wear down an underdog competitor.

The FCC, in turn, must refine its rule-making for non-commercial TV competition.

*Steve Spector is a freelance writer and producer who has worked in the alternative radio movement.*



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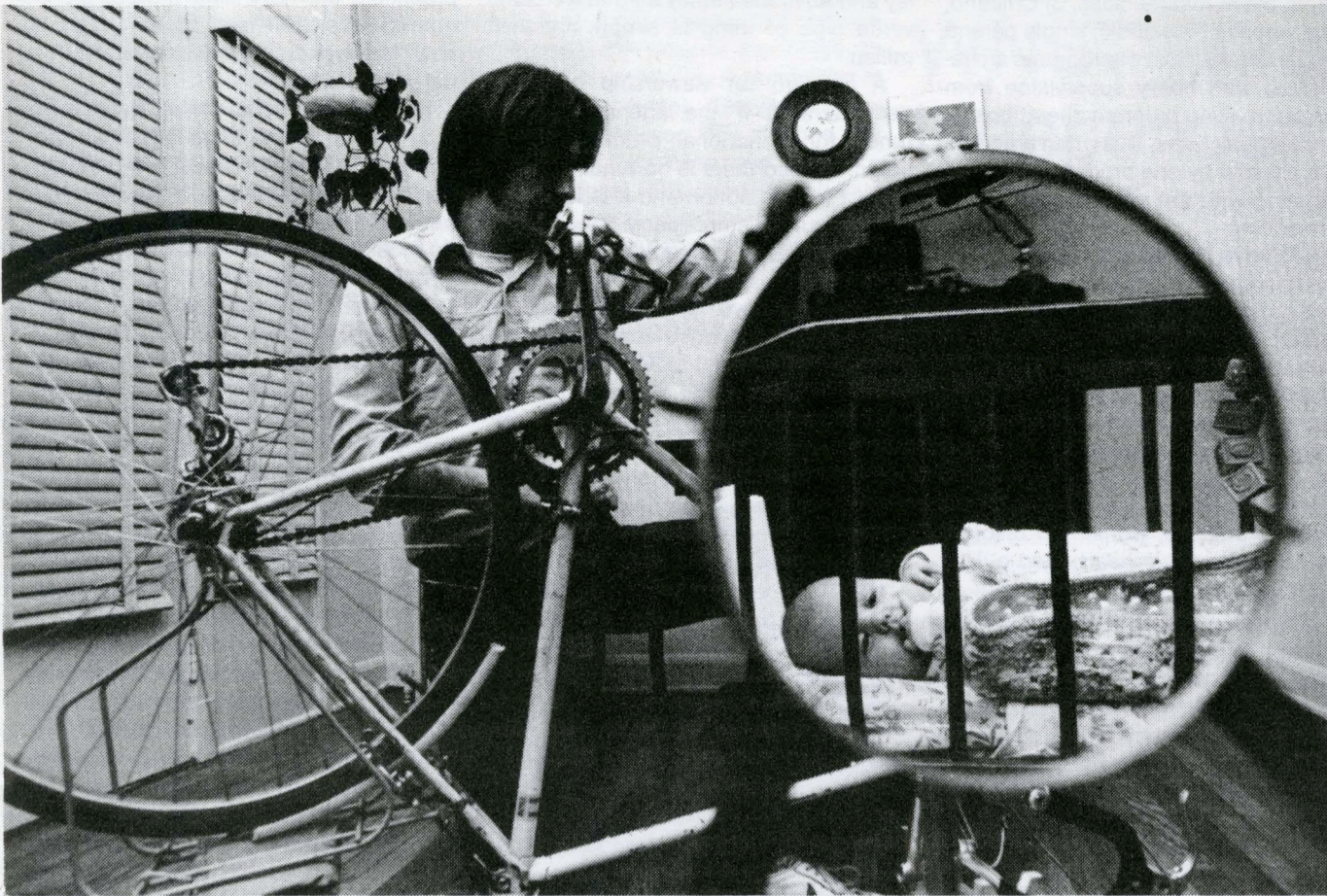


PHOTO: LEONARD RIZZI

## Can Meathead & Laverne Boost HEW's Ratings?

### New parent education series audience focus

By VICTORIA COSTELLO

A new public television series aimed at a general audience, sponsored by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), is using extensive audience evaluation to formulate program content. Both funder and producer have placed emphasis and money on their target viewers in an apparent attempt to answer criticisms of previous HEW television projects.

The Office of Education's Educational Technology Division has commissioned the agency's first adult education TV series, a 20-program, \$2.3 million package on the subject of "parenting." The contract was awarded to Applied Management Sciences (AMS), a Maryland management consulting firm, under direction of a former high-ranking HEW program officer.

Reiner and Marshall are married to each other and are parents, in addition to their broadcast roles of Archie's Meathead and Shirley's Laverne, respectively. Their role in the *Footsteps* series is presumably to combine the celebrity (viewer drawing) and the parent (viewer empathizing) points of view on the program themes.

Topics to be treated include discipline, early stimulation, handicaps, nutrition, prenatal preparation, forming values, emotions, play, individuality.

This Parent Education Project was the parting pet project of former Commissioner of Education, Terrel Bell. Too many kids are going to school unprepared, reasoned Bell, and therefore, parents are not playing a large enough educational role in the pre-school years. The RFP for a television project to try and meet this need went out in spring of 1976 and was awarded later that year to Applied Management Sciences (AMS), a management consulting firm based in Maryland. Research for the series is being carried out by the Maryland Institute for Child Study while the actual production is in the hands of the Educational Film Center, which has produced previous HEW-funded programs.

Jerry Sandler of AMS, executive pro-

ducer of the series sums up the risks he faces: "There is a lot at stake here . . . to the extent we succeed, we help get more money for OE for this kind of project, which of course means more money for program developers, production labs, PBS stations and others. To the extent we fail, we hurt these same groups."

Director of OE's Educational Technology Division, Dr. Malcolm Davis adds, "To continue funding *Sesame Street* (funded by his office for the past seven years, until 1976), would be no risk to us, but to start an adult education television series for national broadcast, that is indeed a high risk project."

#### HEW's recent ETV funding

To better understand these concerns and how they may be relevant to other Educational TV (ETV) programmers and consumers, it helps us to look more closely at HEW's recent funding activity, as well as at some of the criticism it has received inside and outside of the agency. Then we will return to the *Footsteps* series to see how this series reflects certain trends within ETV funding and production.

An HEW study released in April 1977 reported that "since funding began for the Children's Television Workshop (CTW) in FY 1968, nine different HEW agencies and offices have supported TV and radio programs during 1976-1977 the Education division will have spent over \$45 million for educational TV and radio programming." Dr. Roland Johnson of Indiana University's School of Telecommunications and co-author of the 1975 Mielke report on *The Federal Role in Funding Children's Television*, has noted that "federal agencies have too often turned blindly to television as a means to disseminate information and that often it is not the most cost-effective or effective medium for the message." A major problem he cited is that the agency still rarely considers the issues of audience promotion or viewership its problems but rather those of the distributor and the producer. He pointed out that there is a new consideration of the potential of radio, particularly because of its appeal to

adolescents. He observes that many federal offices are phasing up ETV activity, while only a few are phasing it downward.

#### New media for handicapped

One that has just entered into ETV in a big way is the HEW Bureau of Education for the Handicapped. The new BEH media division just granted \$3.4 million for media projects serving the handicapped. Among the 31 projects funded during its first year were a handful involving video at the school level and three described as "general audience" television programming series. (See *Resources*, Media Grantees.) This office is apparently here to stay and will begin accepting new proposals again next February.

At the same time, there is some HEW resistance to the funding by individual divisions within the agency of this kind of programming—like *Footsteps*, which unlike professional or training tapes could be categorized as public information programming for general audiences. *TELEVISIONS* has been told by a program director who wishes to remain unnamed, that this is due to the efforts of the recently appointed Assistant Secretary for Public Information, Eileen Shenahan, who is trying to shape up the agency's media output. She wants to clamp down on general audience programming until problems of program duplication, mis-

management, and lack of coordination among ETV-producing offices can be dealt with. In the meantime, our source says, "everyone will continue to discuss the seven identical films produced by the Defense Department on correct teeth-brushing" but he and others will slip by a few general audience ETV projects in their respective departments.

The aforementioned HEW study on its telecommunications activities mentions the growing possibility of a future separate HEW office to coordinate all media activity. This same study concluded that "HEW's erratic planning for both facilities and programming support have contributed, in part, to the present instability of Public Broadcasting." Although it is difficult to assess the eventual significance of any of this activity or criticism, it is clear that the escalation of ETV and ER activity within HEW is directly proportional to its degree of influence as a major funding source on independent producers & Public Television, particularly in terms of their future programming designs.

The office which spends the largest piece of HEW's ETV budget is the Office of Children's TV, ESAA (The Emergency School Aid Act). Programming is generated from this office on racial and ethnic themes for minority and non-minority youth. (See *TELEVISIONS* vol. IV no. 2, "Does Target Programming Serve Minorities?") Seventeen of these series have thus far been funded, usually in the range of \$2 to \$4 million. They are being produced by a variety of PBS stations and large production labs.

Criticism of ESSA-TV series, which often has extended to other HEW-sponsored television as well, has centered on questions of government content interference (whether the granting process and the supervision of projects constitute forms of indirect censorship), quality of programming, lack of promotion budgets, lack of long-range financing, and most recently, the lack of evaluation of viewership of these target audience programs among their intended populations.

#### No ratings for target audience

This latter issue was the subject of a recent *TV Guide* report (May 21; "Bilingual TV for Children") which stated that there are an estimated five million bilingual children in the U.S. but there are no ratings available on a continuing basis for two of the major ESSA-TV series targeted to this audience, *Villa Allegre* and *Carasconlendas*.

The report also referred to a special 1976 Neilson survey which showed that a combined audience of 4.8 million households watched the two shows for more than five minutes at least once during a four-week period, compared to *Sesame Street's* 14.7 million. ESSA-TV Director David Berkman has based the de-

#### HEW's ETA Activities, FY 1968 - FY 1976

(Specifically including public broadcasting as a target)

ESAA-TV (18 series)	ESAA, OE	\$36,000,000*
Children's Television Workshop	Office of Ed Tech, OE	33,800,000
Parenting Series (to Applied Management Sciences)	OET, OE	1,500,000**
Alcohol Series (To Educational Film Ctr.)	OET, OE	260,000
Career Awareness (To KCET-TV)	NIE	3,500,000
Univ of Mid-America	NIE	4,200,000
Law, med training (To Montana Cable TV)	Fund for Improvement of Post Secondary ED (FIPSE)	1,580,000
Ohio Adult Education	FISPE	1,600,000
Programming for parents of young children	National Institute of Mental Health	250,000
Spanish/English programs for illiterate adults	Right to Read, OE	781,405
PBS captioning project	Bureau of Education for Handicapped/Media	unspecified
Blue collar occupational films	Bureau of Occupation & Adult Ed, OE	543,000

\*Since FY 1973. \*\*Does not include total series funding. Source: Office of Telecommunications Policy, 6/9/77.

fense on assertions that his office has this year commissioned "the largest ethnically targeted survey of TV viewing ever undertaken" and that this survey "will involve a sample 10 times larger than the national Nielson panel."

Some 12,000 children in 60 cities will be interviewed to determine which, if any, of the bilingual and other of the HEW-funded series they may watch. This \$250,000 contract was awarded to Applied Management Sciences who expect to have their data analyzed and available this November.

The agency apparently is trying to answer its critics by providing some broad-based programming which is loaded with evaluation. The Parent Education Project, which involves extensive on-going evaluation, is one example.

The first major children's series of this type beyond CTW's shows to be funded from the HEW complex was National Institute of Education's Career Awareness project. This \$3.2 million series is aimed at decreasing the effects of sex-role stereotyping on young children so that they can later make freer career choices. The series is being produced by KCET-TV, Los Angeles.

It is interesting to note that in its first year the project will only produce three prototypes of a possible series format style, an illustration of the emphasis on evaluation. These pilots will then be extensively tested before the final format is selected. The full series of 26 half-hours is to air in mid-1978.

Producer Sandler of the Parenting Project had been at NIE for three years and played a principal role in the formation of the Career Awareness RFP. When asked why he thought AMS won the Parenting Project contract over many competitors, including several PBS stations, he listed as one of many reasons the fact that he was able to produce the sort of federal RFP language that they wanted in this next major ETV contract.

### Both series aim at middle class

Career Awareness and Parenting have two important features in common. First, a broad based theme aimed at a middle-class public television audience. Second, they both have a substantial proportion—about half—of their time and budget allotted to formative evaluation. This evaluation consists of small group testing of characters and scripts, as well as lab and field (broadcast) testing long before the production of most of the series.

Sandler points out that this type of emphasis on formative evaluation is a recent one in federal ETV investments, with the exception, again, of CTW. Previously, he tells us, series after series would be funded until enough criticism would mount to provoke an agency to do a "summative evaluation" of a project which had long since been completed. He considers his project one which has consumer involvement from the beginning. He also expects the *Footsteps* series project to become a new model for others to emulate.

The cost-per-minute of *Footsteps* is around \$17,000 which includes its entire research and management apparatus. The project time span is three years. The production process is one which begins with packages of research, created by The Maryland Institute of Child Study. They are sent to the Educational Film Center (EFC) which brings on a staff of writers to create the characters and plot lines. At this point character sketches and scripts are sent to "Parent Feedback Teams" who offer criticism and suggestions for revisions.

Five producers are assigned to four programs each, in which appear one of the total of five fictional families. Applied Management, in its publicity releases, describes these families: 1) white middle

class, 2) black middle class, 3) Chicano, 4) rural Appalachian and 5) single parent. Producers of each set of programs are responsible, with heavy supervision from above, for making program alterations as parent input dictates. This often amounts to (we are told by one producer) minimal re-shooting with the possibility of extensive re-editing.

Mrs. Gladys Phillips, a mother of three young children was one parent evaluator. She describes how she went out into her suburban Washington, D.C., neighborhood to recruit other parents to join her. Her group met once a week at noon time so that her husband Robert, an engineer working in a nearby apartment house could also participate. She says of the experience, "I had never before gotten together with other women to discuss these things and this has turned out to be the best part of the project for me."

Mrs. Phillips, one of hundreds of participating parents in many locations, emphasizes that clearly emerges as the strongest aspect of the Parent Education Project, that is, the involvement of non-broadcast group viewing where members of the intended target audience can discuss and go beyond the programs to their own experience.



Mrs. Gladys Phillips and her children in their Landover, Md. home.

### The process of evaluation

As of this September, three pilots have been produced and shown in both lab and field tests. Early reports from the lab tests included mixed reactions to program style and characters. Each program begins with a "documentary teaser" which is a montage of five-second cuts of "real" parents. This is followed by a few comments from the "celebrity host parents" who then introduce the 20-minute dramatic segment with the fictional family involved in a conflict around one of the program's themes. The closing consists of a few more words from the Reiners and some advice from an expert in the area of the program's theme.

Producer Bob Crowther reports that many viewers reacted negatively to what they considered crassly jocular comments of the hosts. These segments eventually had to be "toned down to a more serious level". Another EFC staffer said that the documentary footage amounted to windowdressing in the final edits, and bemoaned the volume of great verite material which landed on the cutting room floor.

On the decision to go with a fictional rather than documentary core for the series, Sandler described it as both an "artistic and pragmatic issue," though his emphasis was clearly on the latter. He said "our mandate is to entertain and to educate . . . and the reality in commercial TV terms in the US is that in order to attract and hold an audience you need either drama or comedy that is fast moving and relatively based on real kinds of things." He went on to say "most of our audience is watching *Laverne and Shir-*

*ley* and *All in the Family* so that a cinema verite type of thing is simply not their milieu."

A concern for viewership could be demonstrated if the agency provided funds for a national promotion campaign. Instead there is no funding in this project for promotion and it is left up to "further fundraising." Jerry Sandler tells us the series is scheduled for national PBS airing in Jan. 79 and on the question of ratings he says, "If you compare it to *All in the Family* you're a terrible failure, but if you compare it to any PBS offering it could very well be a smashing success." At the same time he feels "the real way it will be seen is through non-broadcast viewing in schools and community groups in conjunction with curricular materials." He predicts his series will have a library life of at least ten years.

Mrs. Phillips shared with us that her reaction to the fictional segments was basically positive, especially because "it was such a welcome change to the kinds of things I see on television". She did add to her comments that "if they hadn't had the celebrity hosts on the series, she really wouldn't have noticed" and that many in her group "didn't like them at all."

Of her usual TV watching habits Mrs.

producers are rethinking the socio-economic levels of the families and will probably "downgrade" the Chicano and Appalachian ones.

Black ERC producer Mimi Hayes who is in charge of the Marshall family programs (black, middle-class), feels that the decision to create solidly middle-class families instead of a poorer one had to do most with the audience for the series. "Public Television has a middle class and upper middle-class audience and so it was thought the series should serve it."

She added that "this series does present something other than the standard broadcast product of ghetto humor for black characters and shows so it is one that presents a new level of reality in terms of national black images."

Another parent volunteer evaluator for *Footsteps* is Steven Rabin, who is a professional broadcaster and presently director of communications for the National Endowment for the Humanities. He agreed with Mrs. Phillips on the relative worth of the celebrity presence in the programs saying "what is honest is useful, and the celebrities do something which is not very useful in these shows. He added that the hosts would not particularly draw a young audience to the se-

Phillips listed as regulars some daytime soaps, as well as *All in the Family*, *The Jeffersons*, and *The Carol Burnett Show* but that she "wasn't sure if she ever watched public television." She also added that she tries not to have many violent shows on in her house and that her kids like *Sesame Street*. Of the family characters they saw in the *Footsteps* pilots Mr. and Mrs. Phillips, who are black, told us they both identified with the conflicts in the programs and somewhat with the characters, but, explained Mrs. Phillips, "as far as I'm concerned they were well to do and, in comparison, we're poor." Further, she said "I wouldn't mind seeing on TV how a poor parent rears children in a poor neighborhood, because in these neighborhoods you don't have all the help you have in the better neighborhoods . . . you *have* to be a good parent."

On the subject of the class breakdown of the five fictional families, Jerry Sandler tells us that it is true that "with the possible exception of the Appalachian family most of the style of the families are going to tend towards the middle class level." (In the two pilots shown to me the families appearing, one black and one white were both solidly upper middle class.)

In response to a question on this, Ira Klugerman, managing producer at ERC, explained that if a really poor family were represented the program would get "sidetracked" into the problems of welfare, healthcare, economics, etc., instead of the central theme of parenting. Malcolm Davis commented after quickly pointing out that HEW stays, cautiously out of questions of content, that he has heard that based on parent feedback the

He felt the need for more documentary footage at the beginning and closing of the shows. Generally, though, Rabin agreed that the series was definitely on the right track and was a welcome change for broadcast television.

### Issues in programming

The comments of these two participants in the parent feedback process provide us here with an admittedly limited view of audience reactions. They do, however, pinpoint some of the important issues presented by the series structure and content.

Given the mandate to create an educational and entertaining series on a subject as wide as parenting, the producers have succeeded in creating the vehicle for a substantial degree of target audience input. In describing their process as a new model for major federally funded ETV series they also open themselves up to criticism, from outside producers, educators, and others, for the limitations evident in their model. The issue of using celebrities to draw an audience instead of persons from the target audience itself is one to be examined more closely in terms of its effectiveness.

The process by which class levels of principal characters are determined needs to be widely discussed as we risk falling into the status quo of "Father Knows Best" syndrome. In a case such as *Footsteps* the choice of characters is clouded by the program's heavy dependence on Public Television, which at this point is still hampered by a limited audience group. As long as producers must tailor characters to fit this audience, they will be caught in something of a vicious circle.



**The first profits:** In 1934 Philo T. Farnsworth (right), the young inventor of electronic television, sailed happily home with his associates Tobe Rutherford (left) and Skee Turner (center), with a check for \$50,000, from Britain's Baird Televi-

sion. The lengthy patent battles with corporate giant RCA had prevented Farnsworth from earning income from his invention in the U.S., and forced him to go abroad for revenues that could pay the growing legal bills.

## HISTORY

# To England for Cash On the Air in Philadelphia. Last Days of the Lab Gang.

*Part III of the Philo. T. Farnsworth story*

By PAUL SCHATZKIN

In the dark and starry nights he spent on the deck of the S.S. *Bremen*, Philo T. Farnsworth, now 28 years old, had ample time to reflect upon the unlikely chain of events that found him sailing on a luxury liner enroute from New York to London.

By the fall of 1934 Philo's daring invention of electronic television should have placed him at the vanguard of the new emerging communications industry. However, RCA, world's largest radio manufacturing and broadcasting concern, was committing time and vast sums of money to fight tiny Farnsworth TV over the patents which were the foundation for the commercialization of television. But for Philo, his "lab gang," and the scattering of patient investors he had attracted over the years, the "interferences" with RCA had a twin-edged effect. As long as Farnsworth's patents remained under contention, his company could neither sell licenses nor collect royalties on the inventions he had discovered. Without these funds, Farnsworth was hard-pressed to maintain his legal defenses.

Pressure was building from some backers who would have had Farnsworth accept RCA chief David Sarnoff's one-sided terms, which amounted to a total sell-out of the inventions to RCA. Consequently, investment money that could have been used to begin new areas of scientific inquiry was diverted into the ongoing legal battles.

Nevertheless, Farnsworth knew that his portfolio contained many patents that were unavoidably fundamental to the art of turning light into electricity by means of a pencil-thin, rapidly deflected elec-

tron beam. Subsequent developments by other companies, like RCA, proved that this was indeed the direction that the rest of the industry would follow. But owning the patents alone was not sufficient to guarantee Farnsworth's ultimate prosperity.

Since domestic markets were forestalled indefinitely by the cloud of litigation, Farnsworth had no choice but to seek foreign alternatives for money. When Baird Television of England invited him to bring his invention to England, to be considered for a patent license there, Farnsworth was certain that he had found a timely solution to his costly delays at home.

Baird Television was named for John Logie Baird, an inventor of Scottish descent whose mechanically-scanned television device made him the first independent inventor to earn any money from sending pictures through the air. This was possible in part because broadcasting in Britain was almost entirely controlled by the government sponsored British Broadcasting Corporation. During the early 1930's the BBC permitted Baird to use their radio channels at night to broadcast pictures on a temporary, experimental basis. Using one radio channel for his low-frequency, low-resolution pictures, and another channel for sound, Baird managed to sell several thousand "televisor" receivers in kit form throughout Europe. The radio amateurs who assembled these kits were rewarded for their diligence with a fuzzy preview of the age-old dream of seeing from a distance.

Unfortunately for Baird, the costs of tooling up for production forced him to seek financial assistance and in the process he lost control of his company to a

large conglomerate called British Gaumont. This arrangement worked fine for Baird until 1934, when the BBC expressed dissatisfaction with Baird's system and invited him to conclude his experiments. This development came as quite a surprise to Baird's backers, and they urged him to develop an electronic television system in order to stay competitive.

Baird was steadfast in support of his own invention, but the Directors of British Gaumont were not about to let a potentially lucrative business slip through their fingers. So British Gaumont ignored the objections of the inventor in whose name they acted, and compelled John Logie Baird to seek a license from a young American inventor named Philo T. Farnsworth.

The shift in Baird's fortunes began some time in 1933 when scientists at the EMI Corporation in London demonstrated the rudimentary capabilities of an electronic television system to the BBC brass. The receiving end of this system was a familiar cathode ray tube; the camera tube, which EMI modestly dubbed the "Emitron" is a much more intriguing development.

What was curious about the Emitron tube was its unmistakable resemblance to another device, the RCA Iconoscope, which Vladimir Zworykin had first demonstrated for RCA during the same period. Both tubes employed the same one-sided photocathode composed of discrete photo-electric islands, and an unusual triangular scanning configuration. There is no question that the Emitron and the Iconoscope were virtually identical devices. The only question that stands unanswered is "which laboratory produced it first?"

J. D. McGee, one of the EMI scientists who developed the Emitron, currently professor emeritus at Queen's College, London, insists that it is possible for the same scientific development to occur simultaneously in different places because there is frequently only one viable solution to a problem. However, there is evidence to suggest that RCA enjoyed a long-standing, mutual cross-license arrangement with EMI in which these two

giants shared their information and patents.

In other words, in the fall of 1934, as Farnsworth sailed for Europe hoping to form an alliance that would enable him to overcome his difficulties at home, his principal domestic adversaries were already operating a trans-Atlantic alliance of their own.

Of course, Farnsworth had no knowledge of all these backstage dealings. As his boat arrived in Southampton, he was unaware that the struggle to bring television to Europe would be drawn along exactly the same lines as his struggle in America.

### Success at Last

The ship that carried Farnsworth and his precious cargo arrived in Southampton in the fall of 1934. Farnsworth was accompanied by two laboratory assistants, Tobe Rutherford and Arch Brolly, and Skee Turner, who was on board to assist Farnsworth in the negotiations for a patent license.

While Farnsworth and Turner went off to meet their hosts from Baird, Tobe and Arch stayed on the ship to keep an eye on the equipment as it was unloaded from the cargo hold. This turned into an unexpectedly tricky maneuver, because a British maritime labor dispute prevented the *Bremen* from unloading directly onto the British dock because it was a German ship. Consequently, all the cargo had to be transferred to a smaller, British vessel, before it could be unloaded onto the dock. Gusty winds and choppy water caused the crate holding Farnsworth's irreplaceable equipment to sway precariously as it was hoisted out of the hull of the *Bremen*.

Tobe and Arch held their breath as the crane swung out over the edge of the big ship and the crate began a controlled descent toward the bobbing deck of the smaller ship. The crate was only inches from a safe landing when a sudden wave caught the smaller ship; instead of the crate being lowered gently to the deck, the deck rushed up to meet the crate, smacking it with a force equivalent to a fall from several feet.

Farnsworth and his men were unable to assess the damage until several hours later, when the crate was unsealed at Baird headquarters in London. John Logie Baird stayed alone in his office, but his representative hovered about restlessly while Phil and Tobe lifted the lid. The sudden change in their expressions when they peered into the crate was a dead giveaway that things inside looked grim.

Indeed, three racks of electronics had sheered away from their mountings and fallen into a heap at the bottom of the crate. Baird's men smiled to each other when they saw the mess for themselves—now they could report to their boss that the American machine was wrecked.

Less than an hour later, Baird's cause for celebration was interrupted. Skee Turner appeared at the door, inviting Baird and his men to come back downstairs for their first look at electronic television. The Baird contingent followed Turner, accompanied now by representatives of British Gaumont.

Farnsworth had placed both the camera and the receiver near the door, and the instant the British Gaumont people entered the room they were confronted by their own disembodied image, rendered in stunning clarity and detail.

The Britons were startled by the experience. After years of financing Baird's mechanical television system, the most resolution that the British Gaumont people ever saw was 60 lines per frame. Now they were confronted with an image composed of more than 300 lines per frame, rendering detail they had always been assured was quite impossible. Confronted by Farnsworth's obvious accomplishment to the contrary, the British Gaumont people realized that they'd bet on the wrong horse.

The stunning effect of this demonstration did little to ease the shock of Farnsworth's terms when they were finally presented. The Board of Directors of British Gaumont sat in bemused tolerance while Farnsworth explained that in addition to the customary continuing royalties, he wanted a \$50,000 down payment to accompany the license, as a sort of opening fee, a royalties-in-advance payment.

What British Gaumont had envisioned was more like a mutual exchange, a sort of our-patents-for-yours proposition, with no cash involved. But actually, Farnsworth couldn't think of anything in the British Gaumont patent portfolio that he really needed, certainly none of John Logie Baird's patents. It seemed to Farnsworth that he was the only one holding any cards in this game, and he stood firm: \$50,000 cash or no license. The negotiations quickly bogged down.

Farnsworth asked for a short recess to confer privately with his associate Skee Turner. Once alone, they hardly needed to speak; the determined looks in their eyes was mutual. They would not go home empty-handed.

Taking a brief moment to recompose themselves, Farnsworth and Turner returned to make their final stand before the British Gaumont Board of Directors.

It's not hard to envision the subsequent encounter; the spokesman for British Gaumont leans forward, confident that these young, inexperienced bargainers were about to propose a clever Yankee "compromise".

Instead, Farnsworth firmly reiterated his earlier terms: "We want *cash*" he declared, speaking now with a tone of finality in his voice, assuring the Board of Directors that the negotiations were about to conclude, one way or another.

The Board of Directors stiffened in surprise, mumbled among themselves for a few moments, and then conceded to Farnsworth's demand.

## Premonitions of the Shipping Room Door

Exciting as their cruise across the Atlantic to Britain must have been, the return voyage with \$50,000 in their pocket must have been truly exhilarating for Farnsworth and Company. That sum represented the first genuine reward for nearly 10 years of concentrated effort.

Motivated by such sudden success, Farnsworth and Skee Turner spent the entire week at sea daydreaming about ways to parlay their windfall into even greater success.

The first public demonstration of Farnsworth TV had been a few months earlier at Philadelphia's Franklin Institute, where thousands lined up to see the new electronic marvel. The next step, Philo and Skee decided, was to demonstrate the day-to-day operation of television broadcasting, something which could be done immediately by investing the British license fee into a fully equipped television studio that could sustain a regular schedule of experimental broadcasts.

\$50,000 would serve nicely to pay off some old bills, for example, the \$30,000 tab for legal services contracted during the patent litigation with RCA.

Farnsworth and Turner saw their dream of a studio facility that would give them an entry into the lucrative broadcasting business dissolve in the face of McCargar's singlemindedness.

What Farnsworth feared was that his sponsors would choose to take the conventional approach, and attempt to secure the future of Farnsworth Television by doing what Farnsworth called "tacking on the shipping room door," i.e. following in the pattern established by giants like RCA and opening their own factory to build and sell merchandise.

Farnsworth felt that a more lucrative future could be found in the field of television broadcasting, as radio broadcasting had already proven to be massively profitable. Building a studio facility seemed like a logical step in this direction; but in his dreams, Farnsworth would let others worry about the manufacturing. His company would collect royalties for the use of his patents, and

Farnsworth would be free to devote his own energy to new lines of research, to explore the curiosities that appeared in his observations every day.

However, this issue never really surfaced when confrontations began to erupt with Jess McCargar. For his own part, Jess was only questioning the wisdom of taking on another sizeable expense when they could hardly meet current expenses. But when the Board of Directors sided with McCargar, Farnsworth realized that the odds were no longer in his favor. As much as he hated to admit it, this denial of a studio left Farnsworth numb with the realization that not unlike John Logie Baird, he had lost control of his destiny to men who would not always share his vision.

## The Wyndmoor Studio

Farnsworth and Turner decided to go ahead with their plans to build a television studio separate from the laboratories at Mermaid Lane. Skee Turner felt so strongly that such a facility was essential if Farnsworth was ever to surmount the day-to-day problems of commercial television, that he put up enough money himself to erect a prefabricated structure on a hill in the Wyndmoor section of Philadelphia.

While the empty building was fitted with a stage and lights, Farnsworth and the lab gang devoted their time to building two state-of-the-art Image Dissector cameras. These cameras were built for durability as well as high resolution. All the equipment was engineered so that camera and picture tube would both be capable of producing 441 lines per frame—well in excess of the 400 lines per frame that Farnsworth had established as his objective back in 1928.

Farnsworth's crew created and built a special transmitter and a 100-foot tower that could blanket the Philadelphia metropolitan area with experimental television signals. They also designed and built the world's first electronic video switcher, which allowed instantaneous intercutting between the two cameras as programs were broadcast. While all the equipment was under construction, the FCC granted Farnsworth a license to conduct experimental television transmissions under the call letters W3XPF.

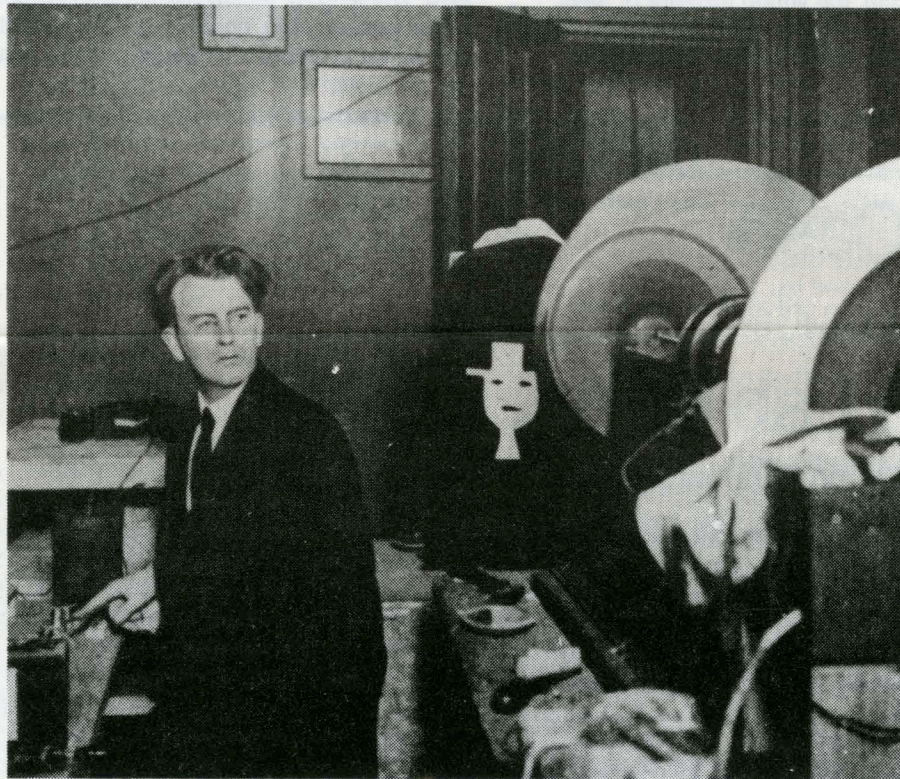
One big job for the new broadcasters was finding artists to perform before the electronic eye. Farnsworth had learned during the Franklin Institute public demonstration in 1934, that he could rely on an endless supply of amateur singers, dancers, musicians and magicians willing to trade their time for a little exposure and the undeniable thrill of being televised.

What programs they were able to assemble were broadcast to a handful of receivers that were beginning to appear around Philadelphia. By now there were three companies in the area experimenting with electronic television: Farnsworth, RCA and Philco. Many of the engineers who worked for these companies had receivers in their homes which they used to monitor transmissions from their laboratories. The few dozen homes that were actually equipped with TV became focal points of the neighborhood, truly the first on their block.

For the time being at least, television was getting started in much the same way as radio, in the hands of a few clever enthusiasts who could build their own receivers to catch whatever was in the air.

Some amusing peculiarities were discovered in the Image Dissector tube as it began the routine of transmitting television programs on a daily basis. The characteristics that caused the most headaches arose from the tube's unusual infrared sensitivity, which caused red, which normally photographs black, to televise as white.

# PHILO



**John Logie Baird, shown here in 1925, was the first independent inventor to derive any income from sending pictures through the air. He had used BBC airwaves to broadcast experimentally in the 20's. Rising costs forced him to sell out to the conglomerate, British Gaumont, which served him well until 1934.**

However, the \$50,000 license fee was not entirely Farnsworth's property. The money, as well as all of Farnsworth's patents were actually the property of Television Limited, the holding company that Jess McCargar formed to raise money when Farnsworth had walked out of the Philco Radio Company back in 1933. Farnsworth still owned a significant portion of the equity in the enterprise, but he was by no means the majority stockholder.

Instead, the numerous investors who had acquired chunks of stock were represented by their own Board of Directors, and that august body, not Farnsworth would determine the disposition of the Baird license fee.

Farnsworth realized how the power in his life had shifted almost the moment he stepped off the gangplank: Jess McCargar demanded that the \$50,000 be forwarded immediately to the business offices in San Francisco, and that the matter of building a studio be tabled until the Board of Directors could consider it. In the meantime, Jess figured that



**Baird's mechanical scanning TV soon became obsolete with the advent of true electronic television. His backers forced him to negotiate with Philo.**

The Max Factor Company in Hollywood contributed their expertise in early color movies, and the coloration problems were solved by applying blue make-up around the lips and eyes. Consequently, performers who appeared perfectly normal on the TV monitor looked ghoulishly blue to the unaided eye.

The Image Dissector also displayed a peculiar sensitivity to certain fabrics which rendered them transparent, as was graphically illustrated the day a pretty ballerina appeared to be dancing naked on the video screen.

Broadcasts from the Farnsworth studios not only proved the feasibility of television, it gave Farnsworth a public image, and the boy genius from Utah became a minor celebrity. Though fewer than 50 homes in the Philadelphia area were equipped with video receivers, the activity was enough to add the word "television" to the language.

For a few months, Farnsworth enjoyed the attention; it was a welcome change after nearly 10 years of hard work in total obscurity. But eventually the obligations of even minor celebrity status became too pressing a burden on his time. What with meetings and interviews and visits from foreign dignitaries all hoping to spend a few minutes with the great Farnsworth, being famous became a job in itself, entirely apart from the work which made him famous in the first place.

The flood of publicity peaked in 1936 when the Paramount Newsreel Service, the Eyes and Ears of the World, ran two stories about the coming of television and the remarkable man who put it all together. One story described Farnsworth as the man who made "mankind's most fanciful dream about to become a startling reality."

By raising the visibility of the company, nationwide publicity raised the value of the stock, and the value of everybody's holdings swelled appreciably. Some accountant with a sardonic wit told Farnsworth that at current prices, his own holdings were worth more than \$1,000,000—these figures made Farnsworth a living example of the American dream—a millionaire before his 30th birthday. Of course, this was only a "paper" fortune. The fact was, Jess and George McCargar continued having difficulty finding investors willing to buy into a company that could not sell its only product.

In October 1936, *Colliers Magazine* ran a feature story about "Phil the Inventor," which said that television seemed destined to find its way into many American homes by Christmas, 1937. This prediction reflected a common feeling of the time, that commercial television was "just around the corner." But Farnsworth knew that as long as his patents remained under contention, turning corners would have to wait for the future.

### One Step Into the Future

With the job of perfecting and promoting electronic television off to a strong start under its own roof, life at Farnsworth's Mermaid Lane Laboratory took on a new dimension. The smell of new work permeated the air as Farnsworth and his loyal "lab gang" began to look back on what 10 years of refining television had taught them. Many of the men still working for Farnsworth had joined him years earlier in San Francisco.

Under Farnsworth's youthful guidance, this unlikely group managed to turn the tangle of wire and glass that produced the first electronic television picture into the total fulfillment of "mankind's most fanciful dream." Others before them had failed, crying that it could not be done without massive infusions of capital, but Farnsworth and his lab gang proved them all wrong. They not only invented TV, they overcame the limitations



In production at the Farnsworth Television Studios in 1936: the first child TV star, "Smiles" Blum, shares center stage with Baby Dolores for the cameras.

# PHILO



Make-up was a special problem for the Image Dissector. Farnsworth's sister Laura applied techniques she learned in Hollywood from Max Factor. She and Farnsworth's secretary, Mable Bernstein, are at work here while Tobe Rutherford operates the specially crafted Image Dissector camera.

of their financing and delivered their invention to the marketplace, ready for the start of commercial broadcasting.

After so many successful years together, the lab gang began to take on the air of scientific invincibility. The difficult they did right away. The impossible took a little longer.

In 1935, Farnsworth's attorney, Donald K. Lipponcott, filed applications for 32 new patents which covered improvements in television as well as some new work that was not directly related. Farnsworth was proud of these submissions because some of them embodied original discoveries he made over the years. But what excited him most about this batch of patents was that 14 of them were attributed to members of the lab gang other than Farnsworth himself.

This score reflects the collective spirit that Farnsworth instilled in his coworkers. This straightforward approach to his work provided an incentive that tied the lab gang together. Their hours were long, the work was sometimes tediously painstaking, and the pay was never abundant, but Farnsworth never had any trouble finding capable men who were not only willing but eager to work with him.

As the lab gang grew, Farnsworth chose new men very carefully, watch-

ing closely for people who displayed both compatibility and trainability. Admission to the lab gang was predicated primarily on an applicant's willingness to take chances. What kept the lab going was men who could, by following Farnsworth's example, find their own way of doing whatever they'd been assigned, and make it work. In this manner, Farnsworth built a well-organized team that could deliver the specific ingredients of his designs.

"I'm building men, not gadgets," Philo once said, and the extraordinary results of his unique style of work and leadership was a testimony to that philosophy.

Once accepted, a new employee found himself welcome into what Tobe Rutherford called, "one big happy family." Indeed, many lab workers were members of his immediate family: his brothers Carl and Lincoln were both members of the lab gang. His sister, Laura studied with Max Factor, and became the resident make-up consultant. And his chief tube-builder was his brother-in-law.

This extended family became a collective unit that was the extension of Philo's incredibly creative scientific mind. At the same time that he was directing

members of his research team to solve particular problems that grew out of the day to day television operations, Philo concentrated his own attention on dozens of problems in basic science which his instincts led him to explore. It was the solid back-up of his laboratory group which provided the support necessary for him to begin explorations in the outer stratosphere of physics.

Farnsworth became convinced that there was no limit to the things he could get electrons to do in a vacuum bottle. He turned to his lab gang to construct the tubes and circuits that could prove his point. Electronic television, which began as a dream in the mind of a child, was now a virtual reality, but the lab gang was the fulfillment of an even grander dream. Television was as much the product of their sweat as it was the gift of his genius. Farnsworth was the dreamer, and the lab gang was the instrument of his dreams. With these men at his side, whatever Farnsworth wished of the future was at his command.

Throughout 1935 and 1936, Farnsworth carried a considerable work load. He spent long mornings at the studio, personally demonstrating his invention for the daily tide of visiting dignitaries and scientists who felt they were entitled to a few minutes of Farnsworth's time. The afternoons he spent at the laboratory on Mermaid Lane, working on solutions to problems that came up at the studio. The evenings he spent either at the lab or at home, working on his new ideas and developing the mathematics for his own theories.

These jobs alone were enough for three men, but there was no end to the distractions that kept Farnsworth away from what he considered the important work. Most disturbingly, the people who were primarily responsible for funding Farnsworth's enterprise did not share his enthusiasm for opening new lines of research. After all, there was still no settlement in sight from RCA, and the dream of video broadcasting remained indefinitely postponed. Until the RCA litigation was cleared up, all this talk of advanced science struck Jess McCargar as somewhat premature.

In fact, McCargar was beginning to display impatience with the whole affair, and suggested on more than one occasion that maybe accepting RCA's offer for a complete sell out wasn't such a bad idea after all. The suggestion only proved to Phil that Jess would never understand how a patent was something that could earn money from licensing, without ever being sold. McCargar could only make judgments based on how much things cost, and now, as usual, they cost too much.

In the closing months of 1936, these pressures began to exercise a noticeable effect on Farnsworth's delicate physiological balance. He began to show the signs of growing tired each day, and his disposition sometimes turned sour. After pushing himself relentlessly for 10 years, he was finally beginning to reach the limits of his endurance.

As if life on Mermaid Lane wasn't already intense enough, Farnsworth learned in the autumn of 1936 that his only licensee, Baird of England, was in trouble. The BBC was all set to award its television contract to EMI, but Baird and his backers raised such a fuss that the matter came up in Parliament, where the Selsdun Committee was appointed to make certain that the BBC conducted competitive testing between EMI and Baird before awarding the contract. As the tests got underway in 1936, Baird started having problems with his Image Dissector tubes. He couldn't get a picture.

Unfortunately for Farnsworth, there was no one else in the world Baird could turn to for help. Aside from being tired,

he was understandably reluctant to leave the lab. But since his only industrial ally was on the verge of collapse, he had no choice. He agreed to go, with two stipulations: he insisted on taking a slow boat, so that he could have a few days to rest; and he insisted that passage be provided for his wife Pem. Baird accepted these conditions, and Mr. and Mrs. Farnsworth sailed for Europe, making a honeymoon of it 10 years after their wedding.

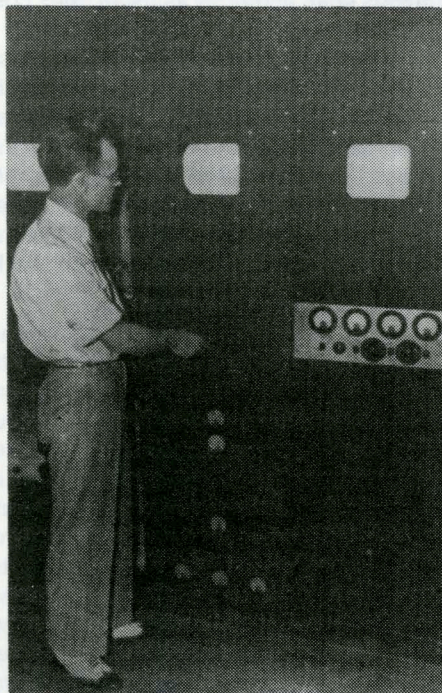
In London, Farnsworth found Baird's equipment set up in the elegant Crystal Palace in Kensington Gardens, the remarkable glass and steel edifice that Victoria had built in the 19th century to house an industrial exhibition. Farnsworth was shocked to discover the real source of Baird's problems: two years after taking a license from Farnsworth, Baird was *still* using the scanning disc for certain components of his system. True, Baird had pushed his mechanical creation to the point that it could deliver some 200 lines per frame, but the competing system offered by EMI produced 405 lines per frame, and clearly left Baird standing in the cold.

Baird was using his Image Dissector tube for his "cinefilm" transmitter, which is the British euphemism for a film-chain, but even in this capacity he was not taking full advantage of the Dissector's capacities. In fact, Farnsworth found the chassis for the Dissector only partially built; Baird and his men simply didn't know how to finish it.

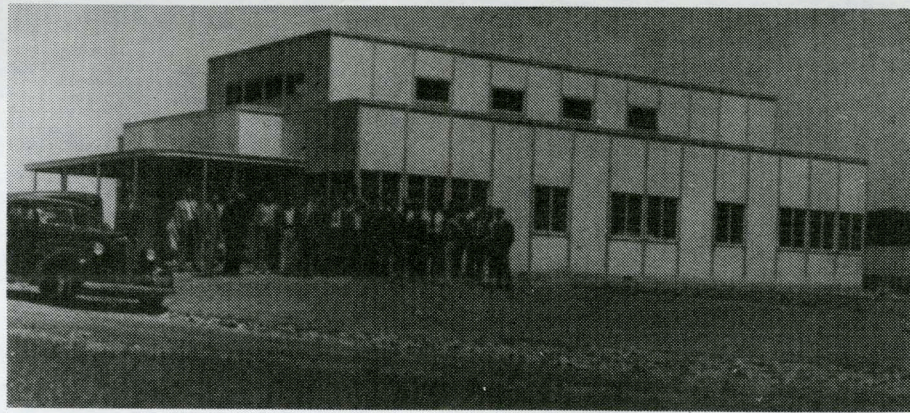
Once he was on the scene at the Crystal Palace, Farnsworth plunged into an around-the-clock schedule to put Baird back in business. When he was done, Farnsworth and his wife drove with Baird and members of the Selsdun Committee to a small pub outside London where a cathode ray tube receiver was set up to catch Baird's over-the-air transmission. Everybody saw the crisp detail and subtle contrasts in the picture delivered by the Farnsworth Image Dissector.

Still, there was really little Philo T. Farnsworth could do to help John Logie Baird as long as the Englishman hung onto his spinning discs. Evidently, British Gaumont, Baird's backers, felt pretty much the same way as Farnsworth. It seemed that Baird's chances of winning the BBC contract were doomed even before Farnsworth arrived at the Crystal Palace.

Having done all that he could for Baird, Farnsworth disappeared with his wife for three weeks on the French Riviera. Conversation during their train ride across France centered on the recently exposed intrigue of Edward VIII's illicit romance. The Farnsworth's arrived on



The new studio operations required other innovations, including the first electronic video switcher.



Convinced that a studio would prove that TV could become operational, Philo and Turner built a pre-fab structure in the Wyndmoor section of Philadelphia, and a transmitter that blanketed the city with experimental TV signals.

the Riviera at almost the same time as Wallace Simpson, the object of Edward's affections, who was forced to flee London as word of her relationship with the King leaked out.

Phil and Pem spent three well-deserved weeks on the beach, during which time Edward announced his abdication. Those three quiet weeks provided a

### The Beginning of the End

After six weeks absence Philo looked forward anxiously to returning to his laboratory to see what had become of the patents that were filed prior to his departure. He had left the work in capable hands before he left, and hoped to see that some interesting results had been produced while he was away.

# PHILO

**"As the full impact of McCargar's blind ruthlessness became apparent, Farnsworth realized that the foundation of his future lay in ruins, that all of his struggles had been in vain. It seemed senseless to continue to stand up in the face of external threats if he was only going to be knocked down in the end by the people who were supposed to be on his side."**

much-needed period of rest for both Phil and Pem, their first real vacation after more than 10 years of hard work. It was also the first opportunity that Phil and Pem had in as many years to spend a period of time alone together. The backdrop of the French Riviera provided just the right romantic touch to reawaken the fire of their affection.

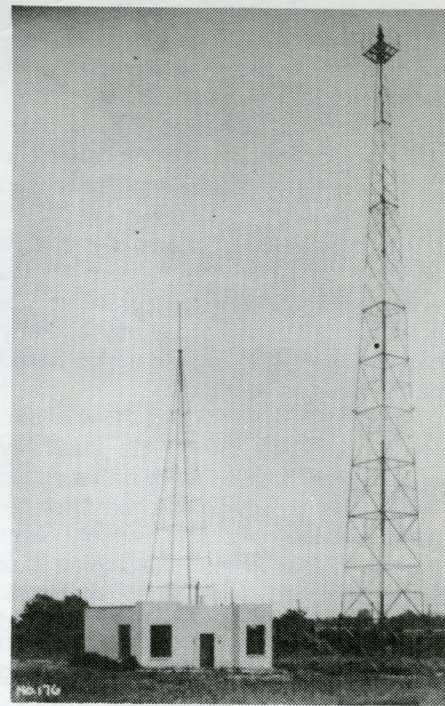
While they were on the Riviera, the Farnsworths were shocked to read one morning that the Crystal Palace was leveled by a fire of mysterious origins, which destroyed all of John Logie Baird's equipment, including Farnsworth's Image Dissector. The fire brought almost total ruination to John Logie Baird, and all but guaranteed that EMI would win the contract to put BBC into electronic television.

The news was a set back to the energy that this trip seemed to be gathering. Sifting through the rubble of the Crystal Palace, Phil found a macabre souvenir of the tragedy—the charred, melted remains of his Image Dissector tube, which he carefully placed in one of his bags, to be carried home with him as a grim reminder of what was left of the British hope.

Instead of hopeful signs of progress, Farnsworth was dismayed to discover that some of the patents that seemed most valuable had been abandoned while he was away only because they had no direct applications to TV. But more importantly, Farnsworth discovered discontent coming from everybody in the lab over the way that things had been handled during his absence.

Philo learned that Jess McCargar had sent Russ Pond, one of his buddies in the stock-peddling business to Philadelphia to take over the management of the lab. Pond was cut from the same fabric as McCargar, and had no prior experience with anything that involved electronics or engineering. Nevertheless, he took his role very seriously, but showed little regard for the delicacies of science. The result of his arbitrary management was a badly demoralized lab gang. Farnsworth found everybody grumbling about how things had fallen apart in the six short weeks while he was in Europe. The entire lab gang was suffering from a case of badly damaged esprit-de-corps.

Russ Pond was sent back to San Francisco immediately, but it was too late to prevent the rapid chain of events that would lead to a confrontation with Jess



McCargar. That encounter became inevitable when Jess decided that Phil should reduce the payroll by dismissing some of his staff, and then decided to come East to deliver the ultimatum to Farnsworth in person.

This, Farnsworth decided, was the place to plant his feet. We would not allow McCargar's shortsightedness to jeopardize his most valuable asset. Every one of his men performed some essential role and none could be spared without affecting numerous phases of the total operation. Nor could he face the emotional stress of deciding who should go and who should stay. It would have been too much like choosing between his children.

McCargar was adamant. "Well," he scowled, "If you can't fire some of them, fire all of them, and hire back the ones you need."

Farnsworth refused to fire a single man, so Jess McCargar took matters into his own hands, as if to show Farnsworth who was really the boss. McCargar stormed defiantly out of Phil's office and announced to everyone present with gloomy finality "You're all fired."

Farnsworth sat alone in his office while his men filed out, quiet and perplexed. Waves of anger and despair seized him as he tried to assess what McCargar had done to his life. The spirit left the room when Farnsworth walked out of the lab alone that night. Pem already knew what had happened when Phil walked in the house, looking beaten and depressed. She tried to talk about it but Phil was still too confused to articulate his feelings. They went to a movie instead.

Later that evening, Phil called some of the men to see if they would come back, but every call met the same response. Even Tobe Rutherford had taken all the static and interference he could from Jess McCargar and refused. He just didn't have the stomach for it as long as Jess McCargar remained in charge.

Hard as it was for Tobe and the others, it was even harder for Phil. As the full impact of McCargar's blind ruthlessness became apparent, Farnsworth realized that the foundation of his future lay in ruins, that all of his struggles had been in vain. It seemed senseless to continue to stand up in the face of external threats if he was only going to be knocked down in the end by the people who were supposed to be on his side.

*This article is taken from a treatment for a television special based on exclusive accounts by Farnsworth's widow Pem and their oldest son Philo III. Copyright, 1977, by Paul Schatzkin. All rights reserved.*

*In addition to Part VI, the next Televisions will feature the story of Schatzkin's three-year struggle to tell the world about Philo.*

# The Quality of Television Acting

## Confessions of an acting coach

By JAMES HINDMAN

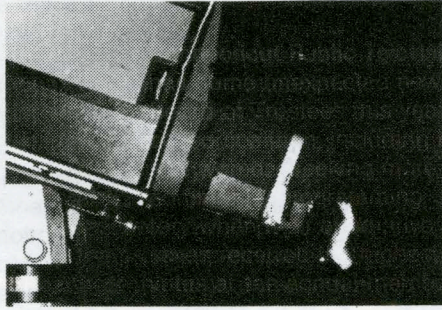
Acting is the most nebulous of arts. When and why it works is a mystery to most of us involved with it, despite our championing of various trendy European systems of enlightenment. I act myself, and I help others to act better than they could alone. Basically we all work with meticulous observation, endless repetition, rigorous preparation, and blind hunches.

As an acting coach, I am in an odd position: working with other people's art. The direction arranges the shape of the performances, the actor brings them to life, and I serve as a tenuous link between everybody's ideal, and the shaky reality of preparing a show.

I am in the process of making a transition, however.

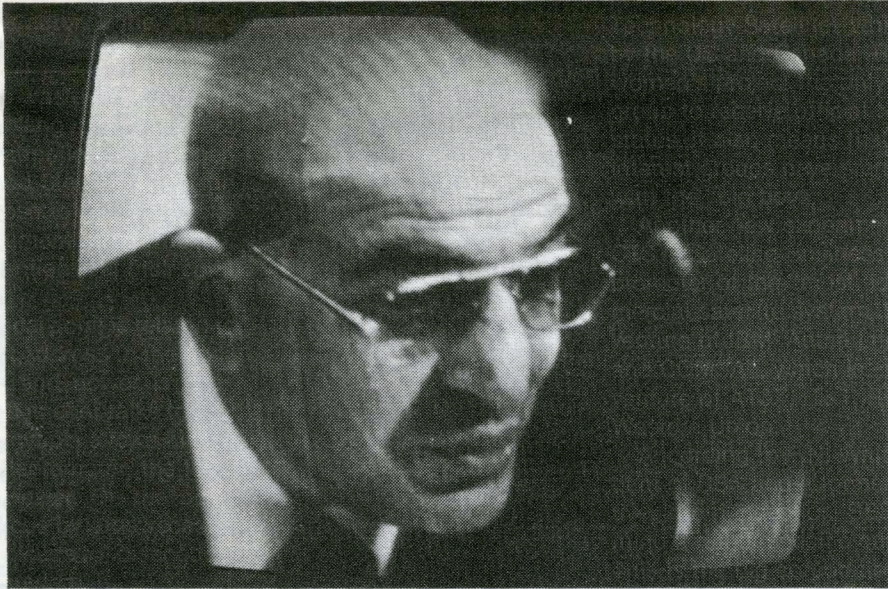
After years of hacking around the theatre (especially "educational" theatre), the zing was beginning to wear thin. I was helping to prepare people for careers that didn't exist, trying to second guess an unstable theatre that was, as usual, trying to find itself. When an opportunity to work in a media acting program came along, I was delighted to work with what *had* to be the future of the performing arts.

The fact that my experience with TV was negligible did not even give me pause. "Acting is acting", I thought. It was simply a question of adjusting to performance conditions. I had done some work with portapak equipment in



acting classes for feedback purposes. The 'distortion' of the actor on camera elements that I think make up quality in television acting.

Since my own orientation came from the theatre, I had to begin with an understanding of the basic technical requirements of the television medium. Scale was an obvious starting point. The astonishing intimacy of TV means that the performer must abolish the extended/projected reality of the theatre, where performances must be intimate at 75 feet. Most theatre and variety performers made the transition to television best in slapstick comedy. Lucy and Desi still shriek and gesticulate to the wild delight of small children after 20 years of re-runs. Correspondingly, Laurence Olivier looks absurd on the tube; his James Tyrone and Bib Daddy are scaled for the last seat in the balcony of the Old Vic. But we forgive him, because High Drama is supposed to be an uncomfortable privilege in the vulgar TV wasteland.



and screen puzzled me, but I dismissed it as another of the unfortunate limitations of technology.

Serious TV studio work with student actors was another matter entirely. Like a neophyte sailor trying to make a tiller work like a steering wheel, everything seemed to operate backwards. My best stage actors looked oafish and grotesque; the floor manager looked better than any of the performers did just standing in for a lighting check. Voice, gesture, scale, relationships—virtually nothing carried over from the stage.

Implied, my real problem was that I had no idea what *good* television acting was. Like most viewers, I was passive in front of a TV. I had no developed critical sense of what I was seeing. In the studio, I coached from the floor, bypassing the electronics as much as I could. It took a year of painful re-education to accept the medium, to learn what TV did to actors, and finally to begin to build a sense of what effective performing is for television. In this essay I want to outline the

Once I accepted the quasi-documentary quality inherent in the small scale of TV performance, I had to deal with other obvious realities like aspect ratio. My actors did not have a 6 foot, 360 degree globe in which to create with gestures as they had on stage; they had to make it just as real in a tight rectangular plane of the medium or close-up shot. Microphones simply would not tolerate the enormous vocal range of a well-trained actor. Low resolution meant that we had to use extreme simplicity and meticulous selectivity in building actor's business on camera.

As Cronkite and his tribe prove nightly on the news, less *is* more on camera. Good TV acting quickly came to mean doing fewer things more carefully, with complete control, a raised eyebrow or a single vocal inflection. One concentrated element could carry much more than the studied fussiness of the stage actor.

A further difference quickly appeared in the effect of the working situation on the TV actor. Few rehearsals, endless takes, fragmented and discontinuous shooting made the focused, linear devel-

opment of a stage performance just about impossible. Actors with a knack for cliché adapted quickly; they merely concocted the same stew of stock poses and drearily predictable line readings that nightly numbs the palate from *Rhoda* and her friends. Thoughtfulness, integrity, concentration: these were virtues we quested after constantly in the studio.

Having arrived at these insights in the first few months, I felt that I had TV acting fairly well under control. What was it after all but a sort of tiny stage in a box; what the actors did over *here* managed to get over *there* by a magic we didn't have to bother much about. Like a carefully rehearsed foreign language, I merely translated in my head back to the theatre, as did most of my actors. I couldn't quite understand why our work was uneven, stagey, and always seemed to stop at the camera lens.

After some months of trying to make TV work like theatre, I finally had the kind of intense, personal insight that makes what is obvious to everyone else quite



The TV acting triangle, for *Kojak* and everyone: the camera, the actor, & the actor's object.

special and clear to you. TV was *not* stage—where you dress up, cover up, and play it all down. It was a *recording* device, working in a particular way with the predictable elements of space and time, that took what you made available to it. The phony theatricality and stagginess began to disappear from our work as we realized that you don't *have* to point, indicate, show off, play up or down (as the stage actor and director do), but just *make available* what is there.

But what is *there*? I didn't really move on with my self taught foray into TV acting until I could break down the elements we worked with into the traditional framework of space and time factors.

The space which the actor plays in, and to, on television has a single, focused point. Live performance, on the other hand, works with a space that is flat and frontal—a broad plane in front of the audience in which the actor controls much of the visual image and its viewing angle. Television space for the actor is actually 3 pointed and triangular. The triangle is established by 1) the camera (and the audience just beyond the lens/screen), 2) the actor her/himself, and 3) the actor's immediate focus. How each of the three spatial points is handled establishes much of the dynamics of TV acting.

The uniqueness of TV acting is clear at the first spatial reference point, the camera. Historically, TV cameras work up close in dramatic works of any kind, making up in intensity for what they lack in visibility/resolution. *All My Children* traces characters under a microscope; the close-up pins the actor up for scrutiny. Police shows pull back only for fast broad action; then they zoom in on faces, props, locale details for small bits of specific information.

Norman Lear's shows, shot in front of live audiences, alter the way the first

point of the space triangle is used. Since the actors are basically playing to the broad frontal plane of a stage, they generalize. Characters, gestures, delivery—all are broader, less focused, more "stagey" than soaps and dramas.

The second point of the TV actor's space triangle is the performer. On camera the performer is essentially a surface, to be made-up, lighted, zoomed and cut to and from, blocked, *controlled*. Most considerations involved in the actor's physical/spatial presence are under someone else's control: director, cameraman, etc. It is a humble but wise actor who accepts this reality quickly, trusting other eyes and skills to control the medium itself.

The third point in the actor's space triangle is what the performer is focusing on. Directly with the eyes, indirectly with a gesture or the fidgets, the actor takes or points us to another place in the space. Not always is this point shown; indeed, off-camera focus can rivet us in a suspense/thriller or wring our hearts in a

soap. Novice actors waste this focusing device by not controlling it; they distract us by diffusing our attention. Master performers (such as Rod Steiger, when the camera isn't too close to give his tricks away) play this instrument with virtuosity, and the viewers' attention is at their command.

When this third focal point is related to the camera, in direct address to the audience, the intimacy and power is overwhelming. The news anchor talks to *me*; a carefully learned myopia allows him to peer through the teleprompter, the lens, and focus on the viewer. On the other hand, off-camera focus by a newscaster suggests (and soon leads to) disengagement, disinterest, boredom.

The performer usually works with the third focus point while under the control of director via blocking, cutting, or camera movement. It is at this time that the actor becomes a creative partner with the director, combining focus with camera and cut to direct the audience where they need to look. Unless cooperation is complete, the performer will look awkward and uncomfortable—a satiric technique brilliantly exploited by the guest-buffoons on *Fernwood Tonight*. Telly Savalas creates much of his masterly image of easy dominance by tremendously concentrated focus.

Savalas is a good example of a performer with an excellent sense of the spatial realities of the medium. In *Kojak* he works within tight pictorial conventions which he manipulates brilliantly. In a recent rerun, while chasing bubonic plague through lower Manhattan, Savalas's carefully cultivated imagistic performance dominated everyone else in the cast. First of all, his massive face is nearly always framed within shots: door-jambes, windows, car doors, even the ubiquitous hatbrim provide bold geometrical counterpoint to the bulk of the face.

An everpresent key light makes the huge face a forceful triangle, from the enormous gleaming forehead to the firm, pointy chin. During interviews with citizens/suspects/victims (comprising at least 50% of the show) he is usually shot from below and they from above; such shots give him total domination. The upward shots usually catch him from the side, with his head cocked, creating a quirky, off-balance look which he extends with casual headwaggings and nods. In tight two-shots he always fills more than half of the screen, foreground or background, allowing the droop of an eyelid or a liptwitching smirk to punctuate the action.

Such visual conventions are so fixed and limited that Savalas can carry the episode completely with a small repertory of devices. The lengthy pause, the sigh, the gentle gravelly voice all add to a style that creates a vivid and quick image.

Time can only be artificially separated from space in this discussion, since its

In contrast, the tightest control of time in broadcast TV (outside of commercials, another whole subject) appears on high-action programs, especially police shows. The actors on *Kojak* work with incredibly small increments of time, reflected in camera and cutting and particularly in dialogue. Episodes are composed as a series of one-liners, short sentences done as separate shots. The actor has to complete a distinct unit of information use lies at the heart of how *anything* works on TV. As soon as I got seriously behind the cameras and into the control room, I was struck by how *flat* TV seemed. Low resolution and weak light level of the monitor screen would not hold my interest in a TV image for long. Only motion attracted me: camera, cut, performer. However, the lack of differentiation in the TV image sustains a documentary effect, borne out by the length of shots in interview shows. Video artists such as Allan Kaprow extend the flat, documentary look by lengthy studies of simple, pedestrian gestures, held or repeated endlessly.

with each line. There is little continuity or build for the actor; instead each shot is a finished sentence with a downward vocal inflection, set in a fixed gesture or attitude. The effect created by the actor, particularly by Savalas, is monochromatic, discrete, abbreviated. Responses are telescoped and presented with the terseness of a telegram. There is no visible waste in gesture or inflection. Pauses are created strictly by the cutting, not by the character. Camera work and tempo end up creating an equivalence between the actor (and, by extension, the character), the props, the locale.

Actors are allowed to use time in a more leisurely fashion in other genres. Since Soaps use feelings and emotional responses to sell the sponsor's goods, fast physical action is de-emphasized. Shots are slower, longer, closer-in. Character responses become crucial, and over-the-shoulder shots and 2 characters foreground/background arrangements are typical. In Soaps like *The Young and the Restless*, action and story line proceed from a series of realizations and revelations. The 2 shot and the reaction shot present the actor as a victim or a predator, responding with pauses, turns, single gestures to the emotional calisthenics of the story-line.

The bar manager in *The Young and the Restless* interrogated the pregnant teenage runaway in one episode this summer, in a rapidly cut series of above/below camera closeups. As pressure mounts, the actress does a slow take away from him into a closeup. Her empty vacuous face—with this simple movement after the camera cuts—becomes the mask of a secret-filled helpless victim like the rest of us out here.

Unlike *Kojak*, the *Young and the Restless* actors are usually placed in the midst of a transition, a never-ending series of changing moods and responses. Elegant BBC-type Soaps like *Upstairs Downstairs* move the action along more precipitously, but still they stress the fluid rhythm of the Soap's three R's: revelation, realization, reaction, *ad infinitum*. Soap actors don't get to finish things (lines, gestures, reactions). Instead, they make things overlap, reaching forward and backward in time with suggestion but never specification. Gesture and inflection allude to possibilities which are not made concrete.

News and information on broadcast TV, including Public Service Announcements, show a third and different approach to time and rhythm for the performer. Their use of action is neither explicitly physical like *Kojak* or implicitly emotional like the Soaps. Things move here because they are somehow *important*. Structurally, scripting determines the length of each section. Since the build and climax of each story or announcement is tied into the meaning of the dialogue, the performer's function is to indirectly heighten a sense of the occasion. As noted above, direct address and audience focus help carry this sense.

Cronkite uses direct address and immediate focus on a close camera to create intimacy with the audience. Longer timing on shots and pauses before punchlines and between stories enhance the sense of importance Cronkite is trying to create, regardless of the content of the material.

There is a danger, however, that artificial delivery (a la Paul Harvey) will create a phoney build and an absurd sense of melodrama with the information. Performers do not sell the information, except to deliver it clearly. Instead they must sell their own sincerity, general concern, rational calm, and maturely objective good sense. Unwavering focus and strict physical control are crucial to such an image. To keep things moving in those lengthy shots, the performer breaks up the dialogue with arbitrary but

regular emphasis, creating an irregular rhythm that holds us without billing us.

Broadcast TV is filled with highly competent actors and performers who have mastered the elements of their craft. In fact, such competence is so universal that we are struck only with its absence, by the momentary awkwardness that somehow seems wrong even to the untrained eyes. What I have described above are some of the realities which make TV acting different from live performance. Mastering the interplay of space, time, and electronics is crucial to any sort of truly effective camera performing. Most of us are so dazzled by the high level of technical competence that we can watch *Charlie's Angels* with uncritical passivity, yet we groan through the public television channel's offering of clumsily prepared local programming that speaks to our real interests. We are jaded by that solid, slick network broadcasting.

### Why Kojak is better Than Charlie's Angels

Obviously there must be something more to quality in TV acting than skill and slickness in dealing with the medium. Something special distinguishes *Columbo* from *Kojak* and the rest of the pack, otherwise *Charlie's Angels* would in fact set the standard.

Alan Alda is clearly a fine performer whose technical mastery and control of the camera carries him way beyond the sit/com, action show norm. His acting in the first show of the new season is spare, lean, and extremely efficient; in close-up his control of the frame is outstanding. With Alda, character business is simplified, selective, and held to a minimum; there is *no* movement except on his own lines.

There are certain qualities inherent in any outstanding performance that adhere, no matter the requirements or the nature of the medium. They can be quickly and simply put.

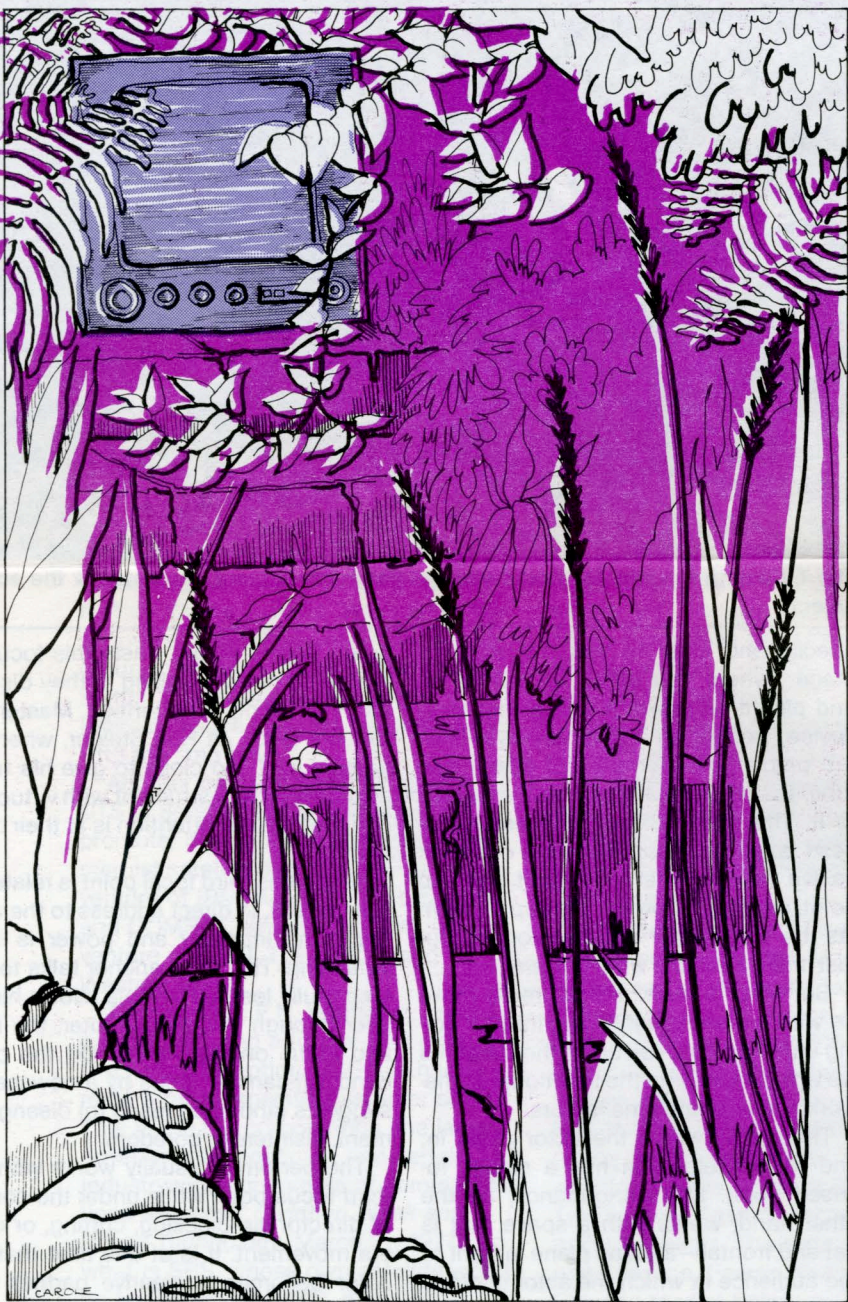
To create a believable, detailed character, an actor must show us someone who wants something, someone with a fairly concrete objective. To get it she/he does things. To show us this, the actor plays an action ("I want to get even . . ."), never an attitude or a quality. This kind of acting precedes postures, takes, bits, business. The viewer sees a real person engaged in something like real behavior.

All business, gestures, mannerisms are related to who the character really is. Nothing is gratuitous, personal-to-the-actor, stock. The consistency of *all* elements of the performance is the actor's major concern, not merely the requirements of the genre, the production situation, the type of character, the immediate effect. The character so created has a biography, a concrete history which has created a believable, logical present and a probable future to be worked out in the performance.

A really fine performance is adapted to the technical requirements of the medium—is, in fact, based in them. Excellent acting turns the banal realities of genre, style, and production situation into advantages. TV acting is of high quality when the actor creates a sort of micro-documentary of a real person.

Quality is hard to come by, especially in the wasteland of commercial broadcast TV. Realistic standards can be formulated for TV acting, however. In developing the ones presented here I have come to respect the special craft of television performers, and to understand something of the possibilities available to the actor on TV.

**James Hindman teaches acting at the American University, Washington, D.C. and is the co-author of the book TV Acting with Elizabeth Daley and Larry Kinkman to be published by Hastings House.**



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