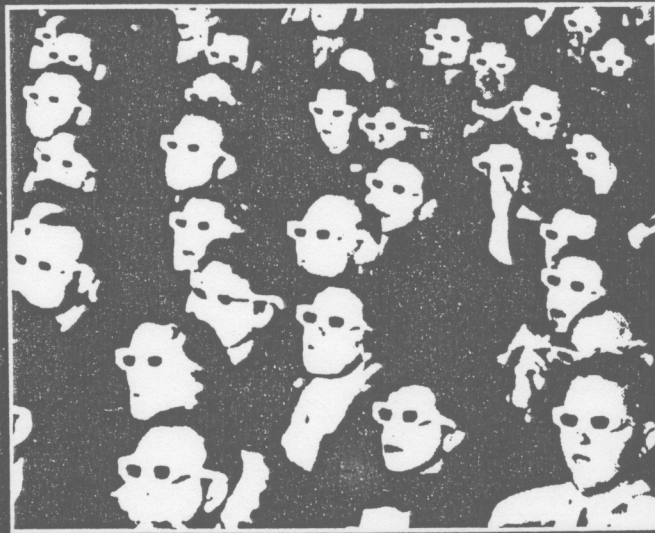


AMERICAN DECADES

1950-1959



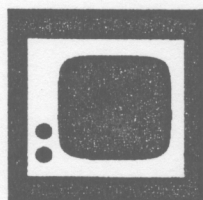
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MEDIA



by JAMES W. HIPPI

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OVERVIEW

The Decade of Television. The stereotype that labels the 1950s as a sleepy, conformist decade is at no time less true than when discussing the media. The 1950s were revolutionary years in the media. During the decade the technology and content of radio, television, newspapers, magazines, and the movies entered a period of rapid change. In the aftermath of the Great Depression and World War II, the pent-up demand for goods and services and the unexploited supply of new technologies combined to bring a nearly unprecedented wave of radical change to many areas of American life. The rise of television as an entertainment center for the American public was the dominant media trend of the 1950s. Television supplanted radio as the primary source of entertainment, dramatic, comedic, and variety programs; radio by the end of the decade was primarily given only to popular music, news, and sports programming.

Competing with Television. Changes in the other media, while driven by many of the same social and economic forces affecting television, came to be seen by many as driven by television itself. Radio, newspapers, magazines, and movies all began to compete with television. The success of these outlets was measured by how well they withstood the challenge television presented in terms of audience size and advertising dollars.

Growth of the Market. The potential size of the television audience was estimated at 9.8 million households in December 1951. By October 1959 this figure had grown to 45 million households. The number of radio-equipped households reached 50 million in 1959. But radio had the most to lose from the emerging television medium. The three major radio networks, the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), and the American Broadcasting Company (ABC), all implemented plans to move into television broadcasting. Of these the most important was NBC. In June 1946 an internal company memo had proposed that radio network profits be plowed into the development of television technology and programming. This meant that network radio would subsidize the medium that would supplant it as the entertainment choice of millions of Americans.

Milking Radio. With little money available, radio producers were unable to invest in new programming, and by the mid 1950s many of the top radio shows — and their stars — had transferred to television. With their traditional formats gutted, local and network radio programmers turned to recorded music. They also began the exploitation of market niches, such as “Negro” radio. The development was assisted by the 1947 invention of the transistor, technology which allowed the miniaturization of electronics. The development of portable radios greatly aided programmers in their search for new and prosperous markets. By 1956 over 3.1 million transistor radios were being sold annually.

Magazine Starts and Closings. The print media — newspapers and magazines — were not immune to the postwar changes. Television networks and the new radio stations, which were carrying increasingly more local advertising rather than national spots, competed for advertising dollars. Advertising revenues for magazines and newspapers increased, as did circulation, but profits weakened as production and distribution costs increased. In 1954 magazine net profits slumped to 2.8 percent from 8.3 percent in 1948. By the end of the decade many famous magazine titles, *Collier's*, *Woman's Home Companion*, the *American*, and *Town Journal* among them, had folded. But there were major magazine start-ups. Henry Luce started *Sports Illustrated* as an addition to his stable, already containing, among others, *Life* and *Time*. *Sports Illustrated* first appeared on 12 August 1954, reaching a first-year circulation of six hundred thousand readers. A new conservative political magazine, *National Review*, debuted in 1955.

Tightening Newspaper Market. Newspapers remained the primary source of local, national, and international news for most Americans. But, like radio stations, newspapers were faced with the dilemma of revenues that did not keep up with quickly rising expenses. The years of economic hardship and wartime deprivation were replaced by years of relative economic prosperity. The resulting escalation of wages, newsprint prices, and costs of investing in new technology weighed heavily on profit margins. Closures and mergers became more common. Fourteen papers were either closed or merged in 1950.

The two Atlanta newspapers, the *Journal* and the *Constitution*, merged, and the *New York Sun* and the *Oakland Post-Enquirer* ceased publication in 1950. At the end of 1959 there were 1,745 daily newspapers, a decline of 2 percent from the 1949 number. By 1955, 94 percent of all communities with daily newspapers were served by newspapers owned by a single company.

The Movie Industry. Movie producers felt particularly threatened by television, as executives and critics predicted that people would remain at home and watch television rather than travel to a theater to see a movie. These threats were exaggerated, but the 1950s brought great change to movies and the industry which produced and distributed them. The antitrust investigation and lawsuit launched by the U.S. government in the late 1940s were finally settled in the early 1950s, and the ramifications were widespread. Movie studios were

forced to sell the theater chains that they owned and controlled. Movies became more expensive to produce, fewer were made, and profits became tighter at the movie studios. Also, the voluntary censorship program that producers had operated since the late 1920s fell apart because of the studios' inability to control distribution. Movie theaters, sold by the production companies because of the antitrust ruling, fought for the reduced number of movies. As a result of the competition, many theaters closed, and profits shrank at the remaining outlets.

Decade of Radical Change. The changes in the media brought about during the 1950s left industries in 1959 radically changed from their condition in 1949. The implications of these changes were still to be worked out in the succeeding decades. What was clear was that the media had staked their claim to being the most influential industries in American society.

TOPICS IN THE NEWS

AUDIENCE RATINGS

Need for Ratings. "How many people were watching?" That question captivated (and still captivates) television executives and advertisers. To find the answer, television networks and individual stations began in the late 1940s to hire firms to do the surveys that determined program popularity and audience. With such information the networks and stations could determine what they might charge companies to advertise on particular shows.

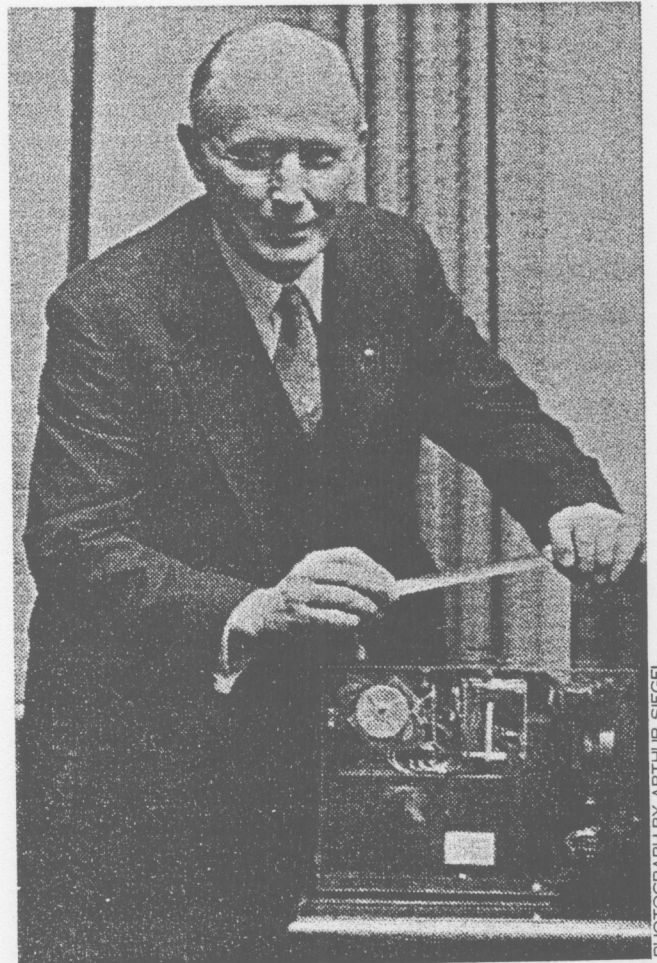
History of Ratings. The idea of audience testing was not new. The radio networks and individual stations had begun in 1930 to test the level of audiences by the use of telephone interviews. New techniques were then developed to improve the validity of survey results. The most important of these were the printed roster, in which listeners marked down on a preprinted list the programs they watched; the mechanical recorder; and the interview. While the radio-ratings service field was very competitive — dominated by such firms as Cooperative Analysis of Broadcasting, C. E. Hooper, A. C. Nielsen — the television end of the industry was the kingdom of Nielsen in the 1950s.

NBC's Gambit. How Nielsen became king is a story of wrong guesses and missed opportunities. Late in the 1940s, as television was not yet widely available, no company offered a television rating service. NBC was especially interested in the performance of its shows and offered C. E. Hooper a list of the twenty thousand television-set owners in New York as an inducement to start a New York City service. The list of owners, frequently updated by the Manhattan RCA television distributor, would provide the raw material needed to initiate a telephone survey. Hooper was a radio fan and did not think television would survive. He was persuaded in 1948 to begin the ratings service when RCA showed him his first televised New York Yankees baseball game. RCA also threatened to provide the owner list to another firm.

Hooper's Misjudgment. Hooper's television service took off and within two years was established in all major cities. In 1950 Hooper was interested in selling his national radio ratings service in order to concentrate on the

local ratings business. A. C. Nielsen bargained with Hooper for the national service, but he was really interested in television. Nielsen shrewdly offered to take the national television ratings system off Hooper's hands along with the national radio service. With Hooper's belief in the ultimate failure of television undiminished, he sold the national television ratings system to Nielsen.

Nielsen Television Index. The basis of the Nielsen rating service was the Nielsen Television Index, a meter



PHOTOGRAPH BY ARTHUR SIEGEL

A. C. Nielsen with one of his audience-measuring devices

system that recorded what station a viewer had tuned in and for how long. During the early and mid 1950s, when many cities had only one or two stations, networks and affiliates were less concerned with the popularity of individual shows. What was important was the network lineup on particular nights, which, if popular, could dominate viewing. This thinking became commonplace among the networks; it was still common in the 1980s and early 1990s to hear advertisements touting a particular network's "Thursday night" or "Saturday night" comedies, for instance. By the end of the 1950s the television market was varied enough that the ratings for individual shows became important.

The Endurance of Ratings. Ratings themselves lent at least the perception of objectivity to the buying and selling of television advertising, a business worth \$1 billion in 1955. As television grew during the 1950s and after to become the primary medium for national product advertising, the ratings companies were compelled to develop more-precise statistical measures to produce numbers to convince companies to buy advertising on particular shows. Ratings were the business end of the creative process. Poor ratings could kill a critically acclaimed show, and high ratings could save a show denounced as the worst drivel. Critics pointed to ratings as causing a tilt from art to commerce in determining television lineups.

Sources:

Hugh Malcolm Bevell, Jr., *Audience Ratings: Radio, Television, Cable* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1988);

Karen S. Buzzard, *Chains of Gold: Marketing the Ratings and Rating the Markets* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1990).

COLLIER'S CLOSES

Magazine Economics. The closing of *Collier's* magazine in 1956 shockingly illustrated the postwar changes in magazine economics and the entertainment and editorial tastes of the American reading public. A venerable name in magazine history, *Collier's* had reached its peak of circulation of above four million at the time of its demise. But rising costs and competition from television and more nimble and aggressive magazines had cut drastically into advertising revenues.

Early History. The magazine began publishing as *Once a Week* in 1888 and as *Collier's* in 1895. It finally became consistently profitable in 1929 as circulation broke through the two million mark. During the Great Depression *Collier's* prospered. This was the result of the magazine editors' decision in 1925 to reverse their stand and editorialize against Prohibition; after the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution was repealed in 1933 and liquor again flowed legally, *Collier's* became a favorite of liquor advertisers.

Editorial High Point. The 1930s were its editorial high point. Editorial precision, however, was never the hallmark of what was a competent, popular, general-interest magazine. The lack of a precise market to which

THE LORAIN (OHIO) JOURNAL CASE

On 11 December 1951, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the *Lorain (Ohio) Journal* could not legally refuse advertising in order to coerce clients not to advertise on radio. The Elyria, Ohio, radio station WEOL initiated the lawsuit in 1948 when the *Journal* refused to accept advertising from businesses that used WEOL. The radio station asserted that the *Journal* had engaged in illegal restraint of trade prohibited by the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. As part of the judgment, the *Journal* was forced to print the details of the court's decision once a week for twenty-five weeks. Civil libertarians decried the decision, saying that it made the *Journal* the first U.S. newspaper to be told by a court what to print.

the editors could attract advertisers was a serious problem in the postwar magazine world.

Postwar Decline. Beginning in 1947 *Collier's* advertising revenue dropped every year except 1953, when the weekly switched to biweekly publication. Revenues dropped after World War II partly because of the new outlets for advertisers. Magazines not only had to compete with newspapers and each other but also with radio and the new medium of television. Even rising circulation could not offset stagnant advertising rates. Falling revenues combined with increasing operating costs — salaries, postage, paper — to squeeze the bottom line.

Management Problems. But it was not purely economic factors that drove *Collier's* into oblivion. The management of the Crowell-Collier Corporation, the owner of *Collier's*, also contributed to the demise of the magazine through their ill-judged business decisions. In 1932 Crowell-Collier began declaring large dividends to shareholders, paying an average \$2 million yearly until 1953, when the firm began to lose large amounts of money. The big dividends removed the funds needed for new editorial investment in the magazine.

Competition with Television. Editorially, the magazine found itself competing in a new media world. *Collier's*, which looked at the venerable *Saturday Evening Post* as its main competition, was, according to *Printer's Ink*, "almost in direct competition with TV in the fiction-entertainment area." Oblivious to its new competition, *Collier's* was fighting blind.

Specialization. Too late, the editors and management realized that the magazine world had also changed. Specialization hit the industry, and new magazines with narrow foci were launched even as the older general-interest magazines were folding. *Playboy*, founded in 1953 by Hugh Hefner, targeted men with its pictorials of nude

and provocatively dressed women. *Sports Illustrated*, first published in 1954 by Henry Luce's *Time* empire, targeted sports fans, mostly men. Specialization aided in attracting advertisers, who could choose what type of reader would see their ads.

Decline of General-Interest Magazines. Such trends worked against magazines such as *Collier's*. The number of general-interest magazines dwindled in the 1950s and 1960s. Important names in magazine history disappeared — *Collier's*, the *American*, *Woman's Home Companion*, *Liberty* — but the number of new magazines increased to fill the void.

Sources:

Hollis Alpert, "What Killed *Collier's*," *Saturday Review*, 40 (11 May 1957): 9–11, 42–44;

James Playsted Wood, *Magazines in the United States*, third edition (New York: Ronald Press, 1971).

DRIVE-INS

Drive-In Boom. Though they first appeared after World War I and in significant numbers in the first years after World War II, drive-in theaters boomed in popularity during the 1950s. In 1948 there were only 820 drive-ins operating in the United States. In 1952 this number had ballooned to over 3,000. The prosperity of postwar America was the source of this increase, as workers and farmers, newly flush with cash and driving new automobiles, sought recreation. The drive-ins catered to a new audience of moviegoers who did not frequent the traditional movie theater. In 1950 the *Saturday Evening Post* described the appeal of drive-ins to people with special needs:

Leading the list are moderate-income families who bring the kids to save on babysitters. Furthermore they don't have to dress up, find a parking place, walk a few blocks to a ticket booth and then stand in line. The drive-ins make it easy for them and for workers and farmers, who can come in their working clothes straight from the evening's chores, and for the aged and the physically handicapped.

The Quality of Drive-In Movies. The quality of the drive-in movies seemed to matter little. Most drive-ins showed second- and third-run features, long since gone from traditional theaters. Some showed newer, low-budget, poor-quality fare. The fare did not seem to affect revenues, a large percentage of which (forty cents of every dollar) came from concessions. One drive-in operator was quoted as saying that "the worse the pictures are, the more stuff we sell."

Surprise Success. In the early 1950s the average drive-in had a capacity of five hundred to six hundred cars and could operate twenty-six weeks a year — longer in warm climates. Later in the decade one chain of drive-ins had an average capacity of nearly two thousand vehicles. In 1950 drive-ins sold upward of seven million tickets weekly. Because the drive-ins attracted a different audi-

ence than did traditional theaters, the success of these outdoor movie emporiums was entirely unexpected by the theater industry. In 1952 a traditional film exhibitor derided the drive-in entrepreneur's prospects as being no better than those of running a novelty shop:

It's like midget golf. Lotta poor fellas are going to lose their shirts on it. It's got so every farmer has a piece of land near a highway thinks all he needs is a bulldozer to grade it, and a bank to put up some money for a screen and a sound system and he's in business.

Peak of Popularity. The 1950s were the peak of popularity for the drive-ins, which in the 1960s and 1970s regained the unsavory reputation they held in the prewar years. But they remain a symbol of America's postwar prosperity and burgeoning car culture.

Sources:

"The Colossal Drive-In," *Newsweek*, 50 (22 July 1957): 85–87;

"Drive-In Business Burns Up the Prairies," *Life*, 31 (24 September 1951): 104;

"Drive-Ins/Theaters," *Architectural Record*, 108 (August 1950): 140–145;

John Durant, "The Movies Take to the Pasture," *Saturday Evening Post*, 223 (14 October 1950): 24–25, 85, 89–90;

Al Hine, "The Drive-Ins," *Holiday*, 12 (July 1952): 6, 8, 9, 11.

THE HOLLYWOOD TEN

Dalton Trumbo. In 1957, when Robert Rich was announced as the winner of the Academy Award for Best Screenplay, few realized that the name was a pseudonym. Robert Rich was the pen name of screenwriter Dalton Trumbo, a member of the so-called Hollywood Ten, who had been cited in 1947 for contempt of Congress and sentenced to varying terms in prison. He had also been a victim of the Hollywood blacklist that prohibited real or suspected Communist party members from working openly in the movie industry.

HUAC and Hollywood. The Hollywood Ten case began in postwar America during the first rustlings of the cold war. The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), which had been permanently established in 1938, decided in 1947 to conduct hearings on communist influence in Hollywood. In November HUAC subpoenaed forty-one people involved in making Hollywood movies. Nineteen of those subpoenaed protested loudly that they would under no circumstances cooperate with HUAC.

Hearings. During the hearings, which ran from 28 October to 30 October 1947, ten witnesses refused to answer the committee's famous question: "Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist party?" All ten were cited for contempt of Congress and were sentenced to between six months and one year in federal prison and fines of one thousand dollars. In addition to Trumbo the ten included Alvah Bessie, Herbert Biberman, Lester Cole, Edward Dmytryk, Ring Lardner,



The Hollywood Ten stand outside district court in Washington, D.C., on 9 January 1950 before their arraignment on contempt of Congress charges.

Jr., John Howard Lawson, Albert Maltz, Samuel Ornitz, and Adrian Scott.

Blacklist. After the hearings, in November, Hollywood executives met at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York to devise some way to avoid looking like harborers of communists. The blacklist was the result. All members of the Hollywood Ten and other real or perceived communist sympathizers would be fired and refused further work in the movie industry. The ten re-

mained free from prison while appeals progressed. On 10 April 1950 the Supreme Court refused to review their case.

Underground Work. The Hollywood Ten found during their prison terms and after their releases that the blacklist was not airtight. But it remained humiliating and personally costly. The victims of the public blacklist still wrote movie screenplays, and the screenplays were still bought. But during the time of the blacklist, the blacklisted writers had to resort to subterfuge, selling their scripts under false names for reduced prices. They also had to bear with absurdly short deadlines and slow payments. For example, during the time of the blacklist Trumbo completed eighteen screenplays for an average fee of \$1,750 each.

Breaking the Blacklist. Trumbo's 1957 Academy Award was the beginning of the breakdown of the blacklist. In 1958 the award for best adapted screenplay went to Pierre Boule for the script from his novel *Bridge on the River Kwai*. In fact, the screenplay was written by Carl Foreman and Michael Wilson, two writers on the blacklist. In 1960 the blacklist was formally breached when producer Otto Preminger publicly announced that Trumbo was the screenwriter for his upcoming film of Leon Uris's novel *Exodus*. The economic and social suffering of the Hollywood Ten and the other victims of the blacklist ultimately served no purpose except to show the futility of censorship and blacklisting.

Sources:

Bruce Cook, *Dalton Trumbo* (New York: Scribners, 1977);

"Dalton Trumbo, Film Writer, Dies; Oscar Winner Had Been Blacklisted," *New York Times*, 11 September 1976, p. 22;

Bernard F. Dick, *Radical Innocence: A Critical Study of the Hollywood Ten* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1989);

BLACKLIST ANNOUNCEMENT

Text of the blacklist announcement by Eric Johnston, Motion Picture Association of America, 26 November 1947:

"We will forthwith discharge or suspend without compensation those in our employ and will not re-employ any of the ten until such time as he is acquitted or has purged himself of contempt and declares under oath that he is not a Communist.

On the broader issue of alleged subversive and disloyal elements in Hollywood, our members are likewise prepared to take positive action.

We will not knowingly employ a Communist or a member of any party or group which advocates the overthrow of the Government of the United States by force, or by any illegal or unconstitutional methods."

Stefan Kanfer, *A Journal of the Plague Years* (New York: Atheneum, 1973);

Dalton Trumbo, *Additional Dialogue: Letters of Dalton Trumbo, 1942-1962*, edited by Helen Manfull (New York: M. Evans, 1970).

"I LOVE LUCY"

Significance. "I Love Lucy" was one of the most successful television shows in the history of American broadcasting. First broadcast on Monday night, 15 October 1951, on the CBS television network, the show captured the loyalty of millions of viewers with its comic depiction of marital life. The story of its development and its long prime-time run illustrates many of the forces and trends that shaped television in the 1950s.

Ball's Career. In the mid 1940s actress and comedienne Lucille Ball was the star of a CBS radio program called "My Favorite Husband." When television began to search for programming, CBS executives approached Ball about switching from radio to television. Ball and her husband, Cuban bandleader Desi Arnaz, responded to the approach in 1950 by buying the RKO film studio properties and ambitiously forming their own production company, Desilu, to develop and produce television shows. William S. Paley, CBS president, rejected Ball's ideas for an adaptation of "My Favorite Husband"; in response Ball and Arnaz developed an entirely new project. Desilu planned a filmed program rather than a live show.

Pilot Show. Desilu produced the pilot program for "I Love Lucy" for five thousand dollars; CBS had no financial interest in the show as yet. Desilu's advertising agency arranged sponsorship for the show before it had acquired a network time slot on which to be shown. Faced with the prospect of losing one of its stars to a rival network, CBS bargained hard to keep Ball on the network.

The Cast. "I Love Lucy" starred Ball as Lucy Ricardo, a New York housewife, and Arnaz as her husband, Ricky, a Cuban bandleader. Paley, other CBS executives, and the show's sponsor, the Philip Morris Company, were vehemently opposed to Arnaz being cast as Lucy's husband. Ball was adamant that he remain. When confronted with the network's belief that her television marriage to a Cuban bandleader would be unbelievable, Ball replied, "What do you mean nobody'll believe it? We are married."

Also featured were the Ricardos' landlords and best friends, Fred and Ethel Mertz (played by William Frawley and Vivian Vance). The premise of the series, which had Lucy and Ethel continually frustrating their husbands with crazy schemes, was a familiar one to domestic situation comedies; but the comic talents of the four stars, particularly Ball, lifted the series above the average.

The Public's Reaction. The reaction of the public to the show was overwhelmingly positive. Within four



A scene from "I Love Lucy"; Lucille Ball, left, Desi Arnaz, center, and William Frawley

months the show was number one in the ratings in New York. The Chicago department store Marshall Field began to close on Monday nights so as not to compete with "I Love Lucy." By early 1952 over 10 million households were regularly watching the show. In October 1952 it was the highest-rated show in television. The 19 January 1953 episode, on which Lucy gave birth to the Ricardos' child, was watched by an estimated 44 million people, twice the number of viewers of the Dwight D. Eisenhower inauguration.

The End of Production. In September 1956, while the series was still one of the highest rated on the air, the two stars ended regular production. Until 1961 the CBS network continued to show reruns of earlier episodes in prime time with occasional new hour-long episodes.

Film vs. Live. The success of "I Love Lucy" reinforced trends already evident in the trade. One trend was the growing prevalence of taped programs. Network executives, such as Paley and David Sarnoff of NBC, preferred live television to film. The executives feared that producers of filmed programs, in many cases Hollywood movie companies, would sell their programs directly to the affiliates, the local television stations that broadcast the programs. The affiliates could then sell advertising time themselves and bypass the networks entirely. This fear proved overblown; affiliates remained under tight control by the networks and continued to rely on their advertising contracts.

Critical Dislike of Film. Critics opposed filmed programs. Jack Gould, television critic of the *New York Times*, wrote against the use of film, especially Hollywood-produced film, in television:

On every count — technically and qualitatively — the films cannot compare with “live” shows and they are hurting video. . . . There is simply no substitute for the intangible excitement and sense of anticipation that is inherent in the performance that takes place at the moment one is watching.

A Classic Form. Regardless of the views of the critics, audiences appeared to prefer filmed shows. Film

lent itself to series in which characters, settings, and basic plot forms — set up in the initial episode — did not vary from week to week. “I Love Lucy” was a classic in this sense, and its success hastened the demise of live television.

Sources:

Bart Andrews, *Lucy & Ricky & Fred & Ethel: The Story of “I Love Lucy”* (New York: Dutton, 1976);

William Boddy, *Fifties Television: The Industry and Its Critics* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990);

David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Villard, 1993);

Sally Bedell Smith, *In All His Glory: The Life of William S. Paley* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990).

THE TOP-TEN SHOWS IN THE 1951 TELEVISION SEASON

1. Texaco Star Theater — NBC
2. Fireside Theatre — NBC
3. Philco TV Playhouse — NBC
4. Your Show of Shows — NBC
5. The Colgate Comedy Hour — NBC
6. Gillette Cavalcade of Sports — NBC
7. The Lone Ranger — ABC
8. Arthur Godfrey’s Talent Scouts — CBS
9. Hopalong Cassidy — NBC
10. Mama — CBS

THE TOP-TEN SHOWS IN THE 1959 TELEVISION SEASON

1. Gunsmoke — CBS
2. Wagon Train — NBC
3. Have Gun Will Travel — CBS
4. The Danny Thomas Show — CBS
5. The Red Skelton Show — CBS
6. Father Knows Best — CBS
7. 77 Sunset Strip — ABC
8. The Price Is Right — NBC
9. Wanted: Dead or Alive — CBS
10. Perry Mason — CBS

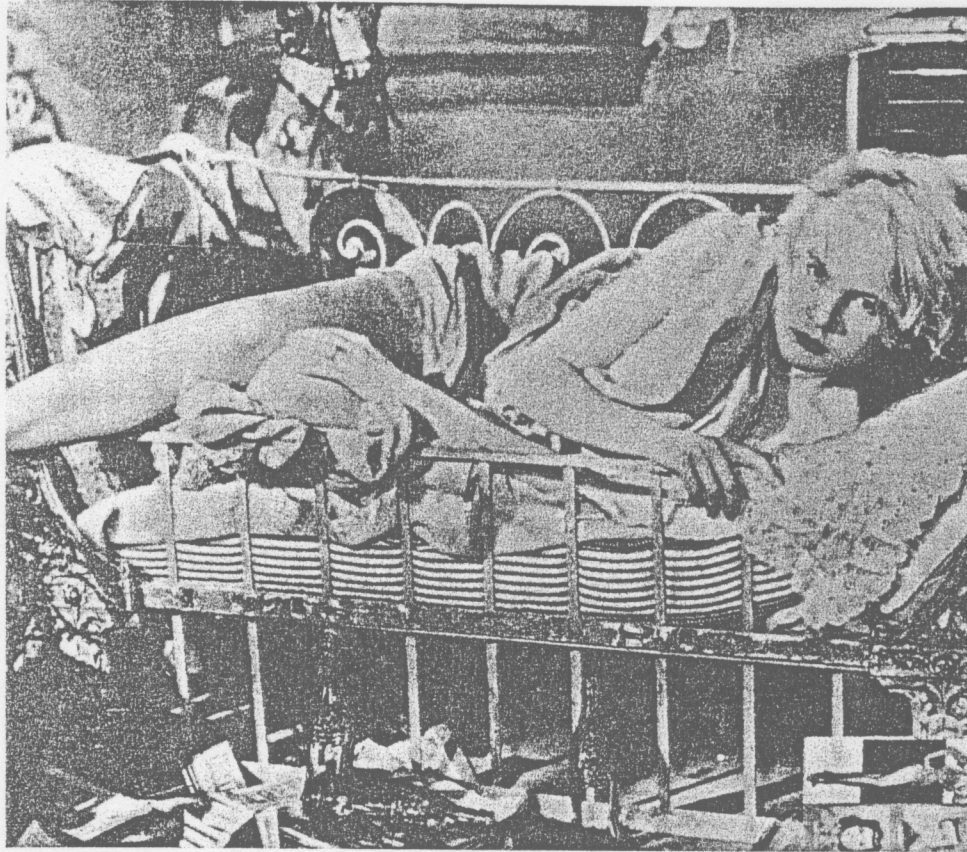
THE MOVIE INDUSTRY

Antitrust. In 1948 the Supreme Court ordered the major Hollywood studios to sell their theater holdings, ruling that the system of film distribution was anti-competitive, and the way Hollywood movies had been produced and delivered to audiences since their beginnings abruptly changed. The Supreme Court decision had many unintended and surprising effects, not the least of which was to restructure the business radically.

Selling the Theater Chains. Early in 1951 the major movie studios — Universal, Columbia, Paramount, Warner Bros., M-G-M, 20th Century-Fox, and RKO Radio — agreed with the Justice Department on the details of selling the theater holdings. The theater chains were sold, freeing a market that for decades had been run as separate monopolies, each studio distributing its own films to its own theaters. The sales had the effect of reducing the number of films produced by the studios, since there was no theater that was obliged to show them without question. In 1954 the seven largest movie studios planned to make fewer than 100 movies as opposed to the 320–400 per year that was common in the late 1940s. With the reduction in the number of movies, the theater owners were hard-pressed to keep the screens busy.

Declining Business. The emergence of television as an entertainment medium also affected film production. The studio heads were terrified of the threat that in-home visual entertainment, including in-home movies, presented to the movie business. In 1951 20th Century-Fox lowered the salaries of its top 130 executives — some as much as 50 percent — because of slumping profits. Fox president Spyros P. Skouras blamed “this great new medium, television.” The moviegoing audience declined from 63 million in 1950 to 58 million in 1952. That same year approximately 640 theaters went out of business.

Moving into Television. RKO Radio, one of the major studios, went out of the movie production business altogether in 1957, its pieces sold by owner Howard Hughes. Though not a direct result of competition from television, the sale was influenced by reduced profits in the movie business. Ironically, the RKO Radio studios were bought by Desilu Productions, a television produc-



Carroll Baker in *Baby Doll*

tion company owned by Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz. The RKO Radio film library was sold to General Tire to be shown on television. 20th Century-Fox drilled wells to search for oil on its property formerly used to shoot films. Many of the studios — Warner Bros., Republic, 20th Century-Fox, Columbia — set up subsidiaries to produce movies and television shows for broadcast on network television.

End of the Production Code. In addition to restructuring the movie business and reducing the number of films made, the Supreme Court decision and the subsequent Justice Department settlement indirectly affected the content of the films that were made. Since 1922 the movie industry had undertaken the task of regulating the moral content of movies through the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPADA) to counteract a public protest about film industry morals. This regulation was possible because of the control the studios held over both production and exhibition. The guidelines controlled the way the movies handled such things as cursing, kissing, criminal acts, cruelty to animals, and a myriad of other human behaviors. The MPPADA studios controlled the production of the movies and could deny distribution of those movies that violated the guidelines.

Independent Producers. The freeing of the exhibition market opened the opportunity for independent producers — who were not part of the MPPADA — to gain

theater access for their movies whether or not they adhered to the code. Even studio movies, under the influence of the more adventurous independent producers and under the pressure of falling profits and smaller movie audiences, began to experiment with language, sex, violence, and other aspects of behavior that until then had been heavily regulated. Movies that in the early 1950s pushed the previously observed limits of morality include *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951), *The Moon Is Blue* (1953), *The French Line* (1954), and *Baby Doll* (1956).

Increased Financial Risk. But the more adventurous movies did little to reverse the trend toward lower attendance and profits. In 1955 the audience was estimated at 50 million, a figure that was an improvement over 1953 numbers. As the audiences dwindled, producers began to spend more on the fewer movies being made, filling them with bigger stars and higher production values. The spectacles did seem to attract larger crowds, but they had to bring in more money just to pay for themselves. In 1948 the highest grossing film was *Road to Rio* with \$4.5 million. In 1952 there were four films that grossed more than \$6 million, with the largest take being \$12 million by *The Greatest Show on Earth*. The biggest change in the movies was the financial risk: the hits made more money, but the flops lost more.

Sources:

Business Week (6 June 1953): 141;

"General Tire Goes Hollywood," *Business Week* (23 July 1955): 32;



INTERNATIONAL NEWS PHOTO

A newsstand during the 1954 newspaper strike in New York City

Will H. Hays, *The Memoirs of Will H. Hays* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1955);

Gertrude Jobs, *Motion Picture Empire* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1966);

Raymond Moley, *The Hays Office* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1945);

Ethan Mordden, *The Hollywood Studios* (New York: Knopf, 1988).

NEWSPAPERS IN THE 1950S

A Turbulent Decade. The 1950s was a turbulent decade for the newspaper industry. In the aftermath of World War II, the economic realities of a radically changed world hit newspapers especially hard. Between 1950 and 1958, 180 daily newspapers either suspended publication, merged, or converted to weekly papers. Many papers also suffered crushing strikes, as labor attempted to raise wages and keep employment levels high.

Return to Normal. After World War II the economy returned to normal for the first time since the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929. As a result, long-stagnant prices and wages began to rise. Newsprint, the paper on which the newspapers were printed and the basic commodity of the industry, rose from a price of \$44 a ton in 1938 to \$88 a ton in 1947 and \$134 a ton in 1958. Labor unions demanded increased wages, keeping personnel costs high. Revenues, on the other hand, grew slowly if at all.

New Competition. In the 1950s newspapers competed with a new information, entertainment, and adver-

tising medium: television. Not only did television have the advantage of novelty, but it also made fewer demands on the intelligence and literacy of the audience. Television's share of the advertising market grew from 1 percent in 1949 to 30 percent in 1957, while the newspaper share slumped during the same period from 36 percent to 33 percent.

Strikes. Newspaper strikes became more common, with a huge strike in New York City over wages in 1953. Strikes also stopped presses in Maine and Connecticut that year. Detroit and Cleveland newspapers were shut down in late 1955 and early 1956. There were strike-related shutdowns at papers in Saint Louis, Kansas City, Boston, San Jose, and Reno in 1959.

One Paper's Story. A prime example of the effect of these trends is found in the story of the *New York Herald Tribune*. In 1946 the *Herald Tribune* made a record profit of over \$1 million. But while the paper sold for 5¢ a copy, it cost 9¢ a copy to produce; the difference had to come from advertising revenues. By 1950 profits had decreased to the break-even point. The editorial staff struggled to increase the circulation of the paper by adopting the techniques and subject matter of the populist tabloid newspapers. Celebrity news, less international news, gossip columns, cash prize puzzles, a television magazine, and a Sunday magazine became the selling points of what previously had been known simply as a newspaper of high quality with good writing and reporting. Profits returned,

but the competitive pressures did not lessen. The competition in the New York market — the city still had six major daily papers in 1957, in addition to strong suburban papers and many ethnic and niche publications — held the price of the newspaper to a nickel. By 1958 the paper was losing massive amounts of money, and it was sold to new ownership.

Effects of Change. In New York City the newspaper industry deferred the drastic effects of the competition of the 1950s until the 1960s; by 1967 only three daily papers remained. But the effects of rising costs and stagnant revenues were felt all over the country. The *Oakland (California) Post-Enquirer* closed in 1950, as did the *San Diego (California) Journal*. The two Atlanta newspapers merged in 1950 to form the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*; the same year the two Birmingham, Alabama, newspapers merged into the *Birmingham Post-Herald*. Twenty daily papers shut down in 1954, the largest number since 1941. Among them were the *Washington Times-Herald*, sold to the *Washington Post*, and the *Brooklyn Eagle*, closed after 114 years of publishing.

Fewer Newspapers. Newspapers underwent radical change during the 1950s. While competition increased among the different media, many cities saw less competition among newspapers alone. Newspapers, in the face of the television juggernaut, became less reporters of news and more sources of entertainment and information.

Sources:

Richard Kluger, *The Paper: The Life and Times of the New York Herald Tribune* (New York: Knopf, 1986);

Joseph Kraft, "The New York Herald Tribune: What goes on here," *Harper's*, 219 (August 1959): 39-45;

Newsweek, 35 (26 June 1950): 69-70;

Newsweek, 36 (17 July 1953): 55-56;

Newsweek, 42 (14 December 1953): 29-32;

U.S. News and World Report, 35 (25 December 1953): 70-72.

PEANUTS

Childhood Seriousness. The comic strip *Peanuts*, written and drawn by Charles Schulz, was immensely popular in the 1950s. First syndicated in eight newspapers in 1950, the comic strip *Peanuts* was the most successful strip of the decade. By the end of the 1950s the strip appeared in more than four hundred newspapers in the United States and in thirty-five foreign papers. The strip was notable in that its characters, all children, acted and talked through their childhood activities with all the seriousness and insecurities of adults. As the *Saturday Evening Post* commented in 1957, readers of the comic strip imagined Schulz as a "superintellectual."

Mistaken Intellectual. In 1956 a staffer for Adlai Stevenson telephoned Schulz to ask him to support her candidate. During their conversation she called Schulz, on the basis of his comic strip *Peanuts*, "the youngest existentialist." Schulz politely declined to endorse Stevenson but did have one question: "What is an existentialist?"



Charles M. Schulz, creator of *Peanuts*

Early Years. Schulz began his career as a cartoonist in Saint Paul, Minnesota, in 1949 drawing cartoons that were published once a week in a Saint Paul newspaper. He began selling cartoons to the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1950. Later that year he sent eight of the cartoons published in the *Post* and a selection of his Saint Paul publications to the United Features Syndicate. In October *Peanuts* premiered in eight newspapers. The strip steadily grew in popularity. A Sunday strip was added, and Schulz began to publish book collections of his strips.

Wide Success. In 1958 Schulz was making ninety thousand dollars per year from his cartoons and books, and newspaper circulation of *Peanuts* was continuing to rise. Charlie Brown, Lucy, Snoopy, Linus, Schroeder, Peppermint Patty, Sally, and the rest of the *Peanuts* cast became a stock part of American popular culture. The Coasters' 1959 song "Charlie Brown" exemplifies the cultural role the comic strip had come to play, as the reference to it was indirect but unmistakable. *Peanuts* continued to grow in readership as one of the most popular of postwar comic strips.

Sources:

"Child's Garden of Reverses," *Time*, 71 (3 November 1958): 58;

"A Handful of Peanuts," *Look*, 22 (22 July 1958): 66-68;

Hugh Morrow, "The Success of an Utter Failure," *Saturday Evening Post* (12 January 1957): 34-35, 70-72;

Gerald Weales, "Good Grief, More Peanuts!," *Reporter*, 20 (30 April 1959): 45-46.

POLITICAL MAGAZINES

New War of Ideas. The 1950s ushered in the modern era of American political thought. World War II had

thrust the nation into the position of leader of the Western democracies in a world increasingly divided along ideological lines defined by the cold war. The Communist governments of the Soviet Union and mainland China were poised to challenge U.S. influences, and fearful Americans began to peer beyond their country's borders and consider the potentially devastating impact of foreign affairs on their lives. The cold war was thus not only characterized by spy intrigue and threats exchanged by Eastern and Western officials, it was also fought on the domestic front. The war of ideas between the American Right and Left was the struggle to forge a political philosophy that would usher the American people through dangerous times. The struggle was fought increasingly between the covers of magazines.

The Left. The *Nation* and the *New Republic* were the most influential political magazines of the American Left. Founded in 1865, the *Nation* had a long tradition of criticizing the conservative influences in American government and society. In 1955 Carey McWilliams became editor of the *Nation* and devoted the magazine to espousing civil rights, arms control, and social programs that would move beyond the limits set by Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal and Harry S Truman's Fair Deal. During the early 1950s the magazine also ran columns that were favorable toward the Soviet Union and often sought to explain Communist expansion in terms related to Russian historical interests. Many critics accused the *Nation* of being too ready to accept Soviet policy.

The Moderates. The *New Republic* tended toward a more moderately liberal stance than did the *Nation*. Founded in 1914, the *New Republic* attracted more than forty-one thousand subscribers after World War II, when Michael Straight became the magazine's owner and named Henry Wallace the editor. By the 1950s the number of subscribers had peaked at ninety-six thousand, and the magazine became an important voice for Stevenson Democrats who sought social and economic reforms. The magazine typified American liberalism in denouncing communism — yet saving its most hard-hitting criticism for Sen. Joseph McCarthy and his witch-hunting tactics. It remained essentially a voice of the status quo of American liberalism.

The New Left. On the academic front a new generation of leftist historians and political scientists was emerging during the decade. Called the New Left and composed of scholars such as William Appleman Williams, Gabriel Kolko, and Walter Lafeber, the group took a dim view of America's militaristic campaign against communism in Asia. Toward the end of the decade it was criticizing U.S. foreign policy as being rooted in expansionist and imperialist motives. There was no major magazine allied solely with this movement.

The Right. Many right-wing intellectuals soon realized that the American conservative movement lacked definition and was too closely associated with the ex-

TRUMAN BATTLES A CRITIC

On 5 December 1950 Margaret Truman, the twenty-five-year-old daughter of President Harry S. Truman, gave a concert of vocal music at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C. Appropriate to a budding vocalist of still-immature talent who was also the President's daughter, Margaret's performance was duly noted in the Washington papers. In an especially scathing review Paul Hume in the *Washington Post* passed harsh judgment on Margaret's singing and her prospects for a career, saying, in part,

... Miss Truman cannot sing very well. She is flat a good deal of the time — more last night than at any time we have heard her in past years. . . . Miss Truman has not improved in the years we have heard her . . . she still cannot sing with anything approaching professional finish.

When the president read the review the next morning, he impetuously, and unknown to his staff, sent an emotional letter to Hume. The editors at the *Post* did not print the letter but a copy made its way to the *Washington News*, a tabloid that jumped at printing the letter on page 1:

Mr. Hume: I've just read your lousy review of Margaret's concert. I've come to the conclusion that you are an "eight ulcer man on four ulcer pay."

It seems to me that you are a frustrated old man who wishes he could have been successful. When you write such poppy-cock as was in the back section of the paper you work for it shows conclusively that you're off the beam and at least four of your ulcers are at work.

Some day I hope to meet you. When that happens you'll need a new nose, a lot of beefsteak for black eyes, and perhaps a supporter below!

[Westbrook] Pegler, a gutter snipe, is a gentleman alongside you. I hope you'll accept that statement as a worse insult than a reflection on your ancestry.

The earthy language and physical threats of the letter did very little to endear Truman to the public. Letters and calls to the White House ran two to one against him. Most agreed with a letter that said "you showed the whole world that you are nothing but a selfish little pipsqueak." The episode showed the power of the press and, in politics, the need for careful press management.

Source: David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).



EDWIN GINN LIBRARY, TUFFS LIBRARY

Edward R. Murrow, left, and producer Fred Friendly

cesses of McCarthyism. The isolationist views of conservative Republican Robert Taft no longer had currency in the increasingly international atmosphere of American politics. In his attempt to consolidate the Right, William F. Buckley, Jr., founded the *National Review* in 1955. His magazine attacked communism as economically flawed, socially destructive, and intellectually and morally corrupt. In so doing, Buckley sought to move the conservatives' attack against the Left to a higher philosophical ground. Although by the end of the decade the magazine's circulation had reached only about thirty thousand, Buckley had largely succeeded in creating a conservative coalition of the religious Right, economic libertarians, and anti-Communists. He also worked to eliminate the more racist and antireligious elements from the *National Review* conservative coalition and established a more internationalist wing of conservatism. By doing so he made his brand of right-wing ideology fashionable for many of the intellectual elite and also for cold war strategists.

Sources:

John P. Diggins, *The American Left in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973);

George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (New York: Basic Books, 1979);

Theodore Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979).

"SEE IT NOW" CANCELED

Significance of Cancellation. The 1958 cancellation of Edward R. Murrow's respected news and documentary television show "See It Now" by CBS showed many the growing importance of profit over public interest in broadcasting.

Financial Costs. "See It Now" first aired on 18 November 1951. Though the first two shows were without a sponsor, by the third episode ALCOA (Aluminum Company of America) had signed up to pay CBS thirty-four thousand dollars a week to air its commercials during the show and an additional twenty-three thousand dollars to subsidize production costs; anything above that figure was paid by the network. As "See It Now" garnered positive reviews and respectable ratings, network chief William S. Paley resigned himself to the fact that the show made the network no money.

Controversial Subjects. But "See It Now" was also controversial. On many occasions Paley had to endure angry phone calls from irate congressmen and business leaders, upset that Murrow had questioned their behavior. Still Paley persevered with the show, partly out of reluctance to end a show of such importance and partly out of his friendship and respect for Murrow.

A Glimpse of the Future. In 1955 "The \$64,000 Question" premiered on CBS. Watching the show, Murrow turned to his coproducer Fred Friendly and asked how long he thought "See It Now" could keep its prime-time slot in the face of such popular and low-cost competition. In the 1955 season "See It Now" was reduced from a weekly schedule to six to eight shows a year.

Responsibilities of Success. The nature of CBS had changed. It was no longer a small, unprofitable television network but a thriving media and manufacturing conglomerate. Paley had more at stake than the network's reputation or a friend's respect. He ran a company that had made profits of \$16 million in 1955 and was subject to the expectations of shareholders. But Paley was still willing to swallow the forgone profits of scheduling "See



CULVER PICTURES

Rehearsal shot from "The Goldbergs," a radio serial that successfully made the jump to television

It Now" in a prime-time slot. He was not so willing in 1958.

Final Conflict. In an argument arising over an episode advocating statehood for Hawaii and Alaska, Paley demanding that equal time be provided to an opponent of statehood and Murrow resisting, "See It Now" was canceled. The headaches of dealing with Murrow and outraged viewers demanding equal time were no longer worth the prestige of good critical press. The last show was broadcast on 7 July 1958. Critics were outraged. John Crosby wrote powerfully of its demise in the *New York Herald Tribune*:

There have some dull "See It Now" shows, and some have been better than others, but it is by every criterion television's most brilliant, most decorated, most imaginative, most courageous and most important program. The fact that CBS cannot afford it but can afford "Beat the Clock" is shocking.

Source:

"A Fond Farewell," *Newsweek* (23 May 1955): 100;

Joseph F. Persico, *Edward R. Murrow* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988);

Sally Bedell Smith, *In All His Glory: The Life of William S. Paley* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990).

SOAP OPERAS FROM RADIO TO TELEVISION

The Rise of the Soap Opera. Gilbert Seldes writes that "the daytime serial was the great invention of radio." Three "women's serial dramas" — daily radio programs intended for an audience of women, featuring a stable

cast and a melodramatic, domestic story which advanced slowly — premiered in 1931. The three were "Clara, Lu and Em"; "The Goldbergs"; and "Myrt and Marge." The shows, in the beginning only fifteen minutes long, soon became a staple on radio. By 1939 the number of shows had grown to sixty-one. In 1950 the four television networks — NBC, CBS, ABC, and Du Mont — devoted seventy-five hours per week to daytime serials.

Importance of the Sponsor. From the early years of the serials, most were sponsored by soap manufacturers who were interested in advertising their products to women. The daytime serials became so associated with the sponsors that in 1939 some wag coined the term *soap opera* to describe them. Humorist James Thurber memorably described the fifteen-minute radio serial formula:

Between thick slices of advertising, spread twelve minutes of dialogue, add predicament, villainy, and female suffering in equal measure, throw in a dash of nobility, sprinkle with tears, season with organ music, cover with a rich announcer sauce, and serve five times a week.

Unsure of Success. With the advent of commercial television in the 1950s, network executives doubted the possibilities for the television success of soap operas. Many did not believe that women would sit and watch the same melodrama they previously listened to while performing housework. Once again had the networks had misgauged the response of the audience.

Soapmakers Bonanza. The sponsors, however, realized the potential of television. They knew that exclusive sponsorship of the daytime programs enhanced their ability to sell products. They thought that television would

CORONATION OF QUEEN ELIZABETH ON AMERICAN TELEVISION

The 2 June 1953 coronation of British queen Elizabeth II drove the already furious competition among the television networks to a new height. While all four networks — NBC, CBS, ABC, and Du Mont — planned coverage, NBC and CBS engaged in a frenzied race to provide the first taped coverage of the royal events. With combined costs running in excess of five hundred thousand dollars, the two largest networks spent months planning strategies to film independently the coronation and surrounding hoopla. The networks made elaborate, and some would say ridiculous, plans to speed the pictures back to the United States. NBC wanted to bounce a television signal off the moon; CBS wanted to use a guided missile. More-practical ideas triumphed, however, and both networks planned to use high-speed airplanes to fly the tape back to broadcast studios in the United States. The CBS plane arrived in Boston well ahead of NBC's. But the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), with the aid of the Royal Canadian Air Force, was the first broadcaster to receive film of the coronation and quickly began showing the event out of their Montreal studios. Much to the chagrin of CBS, both ABC and NBC cut into the CBC signal and beat CBS onto the air. As for the competition, the winner was ABC, who showed the coronation without spending an excessive amount of money.

Sources: "Long Live the Queen!" *Time*, 61 (25 May 1953): 67-68;

"Who's on First?" *Newsweek*, 41 (15 June 1953): 92.

be a bonanza. Procter and Gamble and Colgate-Palmolive were the two most important sponsors of soap operas. Procter and Gamble quickly exploited what it saw as the great advertising potential of television. In 1951 the company formed its own television production company to produce soap operas. Procter and Gamble's large stake in soap-opera production contributed much to its rise by 1954 to be the largest television advertiser. From \$7.2 million in 1951 Procter and Gamble's television advertising budget rose to \$23.7 million in 1954.

On Television. The soap opera made the switch from radio to television in the 1950s with ease. In 1950, the year that CBS introduced the first television serial, "The First Hundred Years," there were twenty-seven such serials on the radio. In February 1954 there were seven soaps on television. The television soaps quickly matched and even exceeded the audience of their radio counterparts. The television version of "Guiding Light" was watched in 3.75 million homes in 1954 and ranked fourth among

daytime programs. The radio version of the same soap was also ranked fourth among daytime radio programs, yet was listened to in only 2.7 million homes. The shows were televised live daily and were initially fifteen minutes long; late in the decade most soaps expanded to thirty minutes. The time slots for the shows were from 12 noon to 2 P.M. and from 4 P.M. to 5 P.M.

Stubborn Radio Success. Despite the increasing emphasis on television soap operas, radio serials continued to be popular through the middle of the decade. In 1952 the five top-rated radio soap operas were on CBS. The list included "The Romance of Helen Trent," "Our Gal Sunday," "Ma Perkins," "The Guiding Light," and "Big Sister." The audience for the shows in 1952 reached as high as 4 million viewers. But both networks and advertisers quickly realized that the radio soaps were a dying breed. From a high of thirty-five programs on the air in 1952, the number fell to twenty-six in 1955. After 1955 the number of programs on radio dwindled, until by the 1959-1960 season there were only eight on the air: one on NBC and seven on CBS. At the end of that season NBC canceled its remaining soap, and CBS canceled one. CBS closed its radio soap shop in November 1960.

Enduring Soap Opera. Soap operas became the longest running shows on television and also the most profitable. "The Guiding Light" premiered on CBS in 1952 and remains on the air in 1993. "Search for Tomorrow," which premiered on CBS in 1951, continued on the network until 1982 and then on NBC until 1986. The relatively low costs of producing the shows and their high ratings ensured their popularity with the sponsors. The melodramatic stories of interpersonal relationships have led to an enduring popularity of the soap opera, regardless of the medium.

Sources:

Muriel G. Cantor and Suzanne Pingree, *The Soap Opera* (Beverly Hills, Cal.: Sage, 1983);

J. Fred MacDonald, *Radio Programming in American Life from 1920 to 1960* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1978);

Mary Mannes, "Channels: Soft Soap," *Reporter* (23 September 1954): 48-49;

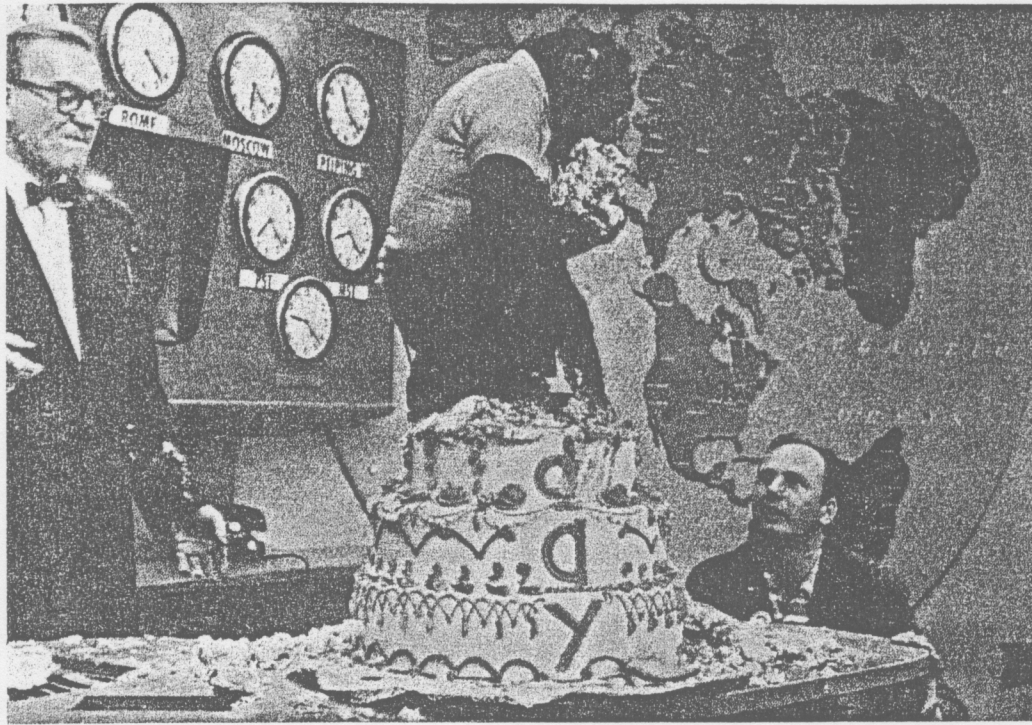
Gilbert Seldes, "Darkness Before Noon," *Saturday Review* (5 December 1953): 53-54;

"Soap in Your Eyes," *Newsweek* (1 February 1954): 74-75;

Christopher H. Sterling and John M. Kitross, *Stay Tuned: A Concise History of American Broadcasting* (Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth, 1978).

"THE TODAY SHOW"

A Risky Morning Show. On 14 January 1952, at 7:00 A.M., NBC premiered "The Today Show." A risky offering in the until-then-barren early-morning television hours, "Today" faced problems that other television programs did not face. First, "Today" faced an audience that was more concerned with preparing for work or school than watching a television show. NBC executive Pat



"Today" host Dave Garroway watches as J. Fred Muggs frolics in cake.

Weaver, who proposed the show to the network, outlined in a planning memo what the show hoped to accomplish:

We are not trying to get people to rise earlier to see the show, nor to stay at home and be late. . . . We therefore must repeat key information . . . all important hunks or points should be made in each of the two hours . . . We are not trying to get a 10 rating for two hours, but we are trying to get sixty per cent of all sets to turn on the show, with time from the viewers varying between a fast two-minute look at the time and the headline from a bachelor who eats out and has a big apartment . . . to a longish hour from a large family . . . where the father hits the road at 7:50 and the kids leave for school at 8:40.

Affiliate Doubts. Second, the show's producers had to negotiate with the network affiliates, the local broadcast stations, to convince them to carry the show. Affiliates, the majority of which did not carry any shows before 10:00 A.M., were reluctant to add the show since it would leave them with an empty hour between the end of "The Today Show" at 9:00 A.M. and the beginning of their broadcast day. Weaver finally persuaded thirty-one affiliates by agreeing to give each station five minutes of every half hour for their own local newscasts, a concession which gave them a larger stake in the success of the show.

The Show's Cast. "Today" was hosted by Dave Garroway, an affable eccentric. The news was delivered by Jim Fleming, a former foreign correspondent. Garroway's assistant on the telecast was Jack Lescoulie. Garroway's on-air persona was so laid-back early in the show's run as to be laughable. An early Garroway interview on "Today" shows the tenor of his laconic style:

Garroway: "Hello, Ed Lasker in Frankfurt. Tell me the news in your part of the world."

Lasker: "The big news is the weather. We had our first big storm of the year. We're really chilly."

Garroway: "You're not alone. Good-bye, Ed."

Need for Spice. Garroway was charming but also slightly boring. In January 1953 the ratings for the show were respectable but not large. The number of affiliates had grown to forty. The "Today" producers decided that the show needed someone, or something, to add spice to the mix.

Chimp to the Rescue. Early in 1953 the show introduced a new cast member, a chimpanzee named J. Fred Muggs. Introduced as comic relief, the chimp had the double effect of attracting children and, through them, their parents to the show and of making Dave Garroway seem more serious by comparison. Whatever the effects, the ratings of "Today" skyrocketed.

Success and the Monkey's Departure. Muggs remained on the show until mid 1957, when the chimp's erratic behavior — he made a habit of biting Garroway and terrorizing "Today" guests — became too much of a burden. By this time the show was a ratings and financial success, and the network had few qualms about dismissing the chimp. Still, NBC felt it necessary to provide a replacement chimp, Mr. Kokomo, who did not remain for long and was the last animal star of "Today."

Enduring Popularity. From a risky venture in the beginning, "Today" became during the 1950s a fixture of the emerging television culture of the United States. It

THE FIRING OF JULIUS LA ROSA

On 19 October 1953 the young singer Julius La Rosa was fired by Arthur Godfrey from Godfrey's daily television show. What was notable in this mundane business decision was that Godfrey carried out the firing without warning live on television. After La Rosa finished singing a song near the end of the Monday morning show, Godfrey faced the camera and issued a thirty-eight-word statement:

That was Julie's swan song with us. He goes now out on his own, as his own star, soon to be seen on his own program, and I know you wish him God-speed as I do. Bye, Bye.

The singer was shocked, as were the estimated 7 million viewers. Godfrey justified the firing on the grounds that La Rosa had "lost his humility." He claimed that the singer had written him a note, saying that "in the future, when you wish to talk to me, please see my agent."

La Rosa disputed Godfrey's account, denying that he had approached Godfrey with anything resembling the haughtiness reported. The real problem, La Rosa explained, was that he had signed a contract with an outside agent, General Artists Corporation. Whatever the reason, the incident boosted La Rosa's career. On the day following his dismissal, La Rosa was hired to appear on Ed Sullivan's "Toast of the Town" show at three times his Godfrey salary of nine hundred dollars per week.

During the two years following his firing by Godfrey, La Rosa grossed over \$1 million and had over

thirty hit records. La Rosa — whose conversation was reported by *Look* to be filled with lines such as, "Cyrano de Bergerac said, 'I carry my adornments on my soul' . . . Man, that gasses me." — thanked the firing for an intellectual rebirth as well as a financial windfall.

Explaining why he had read Winston Churchill's World War II histories, works by Voltaire, and biographies of Michelangelo and Saint Francis of Assisi during the two years on his own, La Rosa said,

I started to read when I got off the Godfrey show, partly because of shock I wanted to find out the reason behind things that happen to you. Also, I began being exposed to people who'd drop names like Schopenhauer or Kant. Then I'd say, "Who's he? Playing first base for the Giants?" I wanted to see for myself what they were talking about, and I also wanted to find out if these talkers were phonies or if they really knew

The firing of La Rosa had the opposite effect of that Godfrey intended, establishing a career rather than ending it. As *New York Times* critic Jack Gould commented,

[Godfrey's] error actually was in forgetting his own humility while complaining that others had. After all, he was doing what he thought best for his own career, yet at the same time he was objecting to Mr. La Rosa following his example.

Sources: "Godfrey Confirms Dismissing La Rosa," *New York Times*, 22 October 1953, p. 42.

Jack Gould, "More About Dispute With La Rosa and Public Reaction," *New York Times*, 26 October 1953, p. 32.

Eleanor Harris, "Julius La Rosa's Life Since Godfrey," *Look*, 20 (15 May 1956): 67-81.

also showed the networks that television viewing was not limited to the time slots that had proved popular with radio. Still broadcast in the 1990s, "Today" has become the longest-running television show in history.

Source:

Robert Metz, *The Today Show* (Chicago: Playboy, 1977).

TV GUIDE

Annenberg's Idea. In 1952 Walter Annenberg, the president of Triangle Publications, the publisher of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and *Daily Racing Form*, had a brainstorm. Astounded by the success of the *TV Digest*, a Philadelphia area publication featuring television listings — circulation exceeded 180,000 — Annenberg's idea was to launch a national publication that promised local tele-

vision listings while offering national editorial and advertising scope.

Local Magazines. Inquiring whether other such magazines existed across the country, he was told that *TV Guide* in New York had circulation exceeding 400,000 and that *TV Forecast* in Chicago reached 100,000 readers. So Annenberg bought them at a cost of several million dollars. *TV Digest*, *TV Guide*, and *TV Forecast* became the first three local bureaus of *TV Guide*. More bureaus were signed up by franchising the national section of *TV Guide* to local magazines in Boston; Davenport, Iowa; Minneapolis; and Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. Teams were sent to Los Angeles and Cincinnati to start local operations from scratch.

The First Issue. By the end of March 1953, four months after Annenberg's initial idea, ten cities were



MARTIN LEWIS

"Dragnet" star Jack Webb reading the 1954 fall preview issue of *TV Guide*

equipped for *TV Guide*. The magazine was first published on 3 April 1953. The cover of the first issue, which cost fifteen cents, featured a photograph of Desi Arnaz, Jr., Lucille Ball's recently born baby, whose birth was fictionalized as that of Little Ricky on the 19 January 1953 episode of "I Love Lucy."

Early Pullback and Growth. The inaugural issue sold 1.56 million copies in ten cities. During summer 1953 five new city editions were added in Rochester, New York; Pittsburgh; Detroit; Cleveland; and San Francisco. Sales, however, slumped after the initial rush. By mid August circulation was nearly 200,000 less than in April, and, by the beginning of the fall 1953 season, magazine officials were hoping that the slump in sales was due only to the reduced amount of summer television watching. September brought smiles to *TV Guide* sales representatives. The 4 September 1953 issue sold more than 1.6 million copies. The sales of the September 11 fall preview issue reached almost 1.75 million.

Significance. *TV Guide* continued to grow throughout the decade; by 1959 there were fifty-three regional editions that pushed circulation to more than 6 million every week. Its success established the extent of television's dominance over the entertainment business and its growing influence on other media.

Sources:

TV Guide: The First 25 Years, edited and compiled by Jay S. Harris (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978);

"TV Guide," *New York Times*, 17 January 1953, p. 27.

TELEVISION CRITICS

News Coverage. The development of television as a new entertainment medium was news in the 1950s: coverage of television in newspapers increased by 500 percent from 1953 to 1955. Along with this increased coverage came the rise of the television critic: Writing in both newspapers and magazines, these men — there were few female critics in the 1950s (Janet Kern of the *Chicago Tribune* was the most prominent) — debated and commented on not only the content of television shows but the nature of the medium itself.

The Elite. The two most respected television critics of the 1950s were Jack Gould of the *New York Times* and John Crosby of the *New York Herald Tribune*. Their careers have paralleled each other. In the manner of newspapermen of the time, neither Gould nor Crosby graduated from college, though Crosby did attend Yale University for two years. Both men trained on the *Herald Tribune* by covering Broadway theater. In 1945, the beginning of the end of the radio era, Gould was hired by the *Times* as radio editor. A year later Crosby became radio columnist for the *Herald Tribune*. With the relative decline of the importance of radio and the meteoric rise of television, the direction of both men turned toward television.



NEWSWEEK PHOTOS-TONY ROLLO

John Crosby of the *New York Herald Tribune*

Gould's Viewing. Being a television critic involved watching a lot of television. Gould and Crosby developed different strategies of viewing. Gould watched twenty-five to thirty hours of television per week from his home in Old Greenwich, Connecticut. His viewing room contained two television sets, one color and one black and white. A third set was available when needed. Most of his work was reviews of television shows phoned into New York in time for the early editions of the *Times*.

Crosby's Viewing. Crosby, on the other hand, did not concern himself with timely reviews for the early editions. His viewing in preparation for writing his syndicated column — his pieces were carried in 103 newspapers in 1956 — took place at his New York apartment on a single television set. Crosby did not attempt to be an objective reporter, as did Gould, but instead used a highly personal style to reflect his own opinions and tastes.

CRITIC JOHN CROSBY'S APPEARANCE ON TELEVISION

John Crosby, the television critic of the *New York Herald Tribune*, made what many called a foolhardy decision in 1957: to host the CBS program "The Seven Lively Arts," an anthology series featuring dramatizations of literary works and historical events.

In addition to creating questions of conflict of interest — would Crosby be more kind to CBS shows now that he was employed by the networks? — Crosby subjected himself to the same criticisms he himself mercilessly applied in his syndicated column. Except for his self-selected stand-in at the *Herald Tribune*, George Axelrod, the critics were unrestrained in their negative notices of the 3 November premiere. Typical of the reviews was that of Jack O'Brian of the *New York Journal-American*.

He seemed to smile as if in constant pain. Close-ups did him few favors, for they presented his face with a seemingly endless mouth . . . which when speaking seemed to be pulled vertically apart as if with unseen strings.

Despite the criticism Crosby remained on the program through the end of its run on 16 February 1958. His reputation as a fair and impartial critic was unscathed, and he continued to attack bad programming, regardless of the network on which it appeared.

Sources: "Dual Role," *Time*, 69 (10 June 1957): 46, 48;

"Turning the Tables," *Newsweek*, 49 (18 November 1957): 78.



NEWSWEEK PHOTOS, TONY ROLLO

Jack Gould of the *New York Times*

The Role of the Critic. As with all genres of criticism, debate raged about the importance or effectiveness of the critics. Both men saw their role as instructing the producers rather than the consumers of television. In Gould's words, "the critic's function is to bring to top management the ideas that an underling is not able to bring up from below." While unsure about the importance of the work performed by television critics, Crosby thought that "television is damn lucky that it has two guys like Jack Gould and myself."

Sources:

"Big Men on the Papers," *Newsweek*, 49 (15 April 1957): 104, 107;

"Out of the Blue," *Time*, 68 (20 August 1956): 71-72;

Christopher H. Sterling and John M. Kitross, *Stay Tuned: A Concise History of American Broadcasting* (Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth, 1978).

TELEVISION NEWS

Television vs. Radio. In addition to becoming the primary source of home entertainment in the 1950s, television also became a major source of news and information. Many commentators regarded television as inherently lowbrow and not disposed to serious news gathering and reporting. H. V. Kaltenborn, a distinguished radio news analyst, stated in 1956 that "there are no advantages to TV newscasting. . . . Pictures are a distraction. Remembering camera angles is a bother. TV news should pay more attention to intelligent discourse."

CHET HUNTLEY'S NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS FOR RADIO-TELEVISION JOURNALISTS

Chet Huntley, NBC news anchor, broadcast these nostrums over ABC Radio on 3 January 1955.

Resolved: To take a walk each morning around a given issue or problem or controversy and report on all the aspects seen or heard — all 360 aspects, if there be that many.

To show some improvement this year in learning how to depreciate my own opinions.

To stop and think at least thirty minutes before offering one of my own opinions in a broadcast.

That if my own opinion must be used, to label it as just opinion with the biggest verbal sign or billboard I know how to make.

To remember, at least once a week, for the next fifty-two weeks, that Providence, unfortunately, did not endow me with complete wisdom or infallibility.

To practice faithfully throughout the coming year to learn how to utter those noble and refreshing words "I was wrong," just in case that uncomfortable situation should arise.

To narrow down almost to infinity, or at least keep to a minimum, the number of your fellow citizens to whom you would deny the privilege of being heard, if you had the power. Rather, to remember that they don't deserve silencing — just answering.

To remember that "success" in the profession of journalism is, to be sure, measured by your actual and potential rendering of service; but it's also restrained by the fact that the bigger you are, the bigger and more serious your mistakes.

To remember that only a William Jennings Bryan and a few others seemed to produce their best effort in the first draft, and Bryan never got to be President. In other words, give strength to cut and edit and rewrite.

To face the East each morning and thank Mr. Sulzberger for the *New York Times*.

To be more decent to my sponsor . . . To do some more serious thinking and wondering whether television is a medium for the reporting of day-to-day news or whether it's more exclusively suited for the documentary.

To waste no more time in search for the "gimmick" or "gadget" for the so-cute and so-contrived television show.

To become a better and more persistent gadfly on the hides of my bosses throughout the coming year in a campaign which is mottoed "There's no such thing as too much news."

To live with the annoying proposition that a little insecurity may be good for a journalist.

And finally — when all the rules, the prohibitions, the restrictions, and points of policy have been violated — to ask only this: a fairly respectable rating on those good questions, "Is he fair, is he decent, and does he have a shred of integrity?" A set of resolutions and entreaties of this nature by all engaged in the business of buying and selling or giving away ideas might cause even journalists to make some contribution this year to our chances of enduring the uncertainties and confusions with more natural composure and inner strength, unwasted by the exertions of emotional brawls.

Source: *Reporter*, 12 (27 January, 1955): 4.

Distraction of Entertainment. Television news from the beginning was believed to value pictures, personality, and technology over good writing, competence, and content. The technology was seen as an obstacle to good news reporting. *New York Times* correspondent A. M. Rosenthal said in 1953 that television "is not interested primarily in news but in entertainment." The technology required by television broadcasting, he said, forced newsmen to work in a "hectic, noisy, movie-set atmosphere."

Third-Generation News. There was confusion in the 1950s over the place of news in television. One source of

this confusion was that television news was seen as the third generation of professional news. The first generation, and the most respected, was print journalism. When radio was developed as an entertainment and information source, its role in news reporting and broadcasting was roundly denigrated by the print media. The same process occurred with television news.

Dominance by CBS. Building on its reputation as a radio news broadcaster, CBS developed the most renowned television news team of the 1950s. With newscasters and reporters such as Edward R. Murrow, Charles



Chet Huntley, left, and David Brinkley, newscasters for NBC

Collingwood, Walter Cronkite, and Eric Sevareid, CBS began to erode the distrust with which many in the public regarded television news. The first regular television news show was "Douglas Edwards With the News," first broadcast in 1948 on CBS. NBC followed the next year with "The Camel News Caravan," which starred John Cameron Swayze. CBS continued to lead the ratings race through the decade, but the competition in the fifteen-minute evening news slot became more fierce from 1956 on.

Huntley and Brinkley. For the 1956 political conventions, NBC brought together Chet Huntley and David Brinkley to form a news team. The network was attempting to find a recipe to counteract the widespread public perception that their news programs were, in the words of *Coronet*, "bland and unprovocative." The convention went so well that the two were set up on the evening news show, renamed "The Huntley-Brinkley Report." The pair quickly became popular with viewers, who seemed to respond to their air of competence; restrained, ironic moralism; and gentle humor. Their popularity was reflected in the ratings; Huntley and Brinkley finally overtook their CBS counterparts in 1960. In addition to being popular in the audience ratings, Huntley and Brinkley were respected by news makers. In an August

1959 poll of members of Congress, 32.8 percent regarded the "Huntley-Brinkley Report" as their favorite newscast. The second-place finisher was John Daly's newscast on ABC with 16.1 percent.

Slow Progress. Yet television news was still regarded as a less-than-serious news source in the 1950s. It was not until the early 1960s, with the Richard M. Nixon-John F. Kennedy presidential debates in 1960 and the Kennedy assassination in 1963, that television showed its importance as a news source. During events such as these, television proved that it could shape as well as report the news, a realization that would have a revolutionary effect on journalism.

Sources:

- Hollis Alpert, "TV's Unique Tandem: Huntley-Brinkley," *Coronet*, 49 (February 1961): 162-169;
- "The Evening Duet," *Time* (19 October 1959): 92;
- "Good News and Bad News," *Newsweek* (7 January 1957): 64-65;
- William Pfaff, "News on the Networks," *Commonweal*, 60 (9 April 1954): 11-14;
- Robert Louis Shayon, "Mileage in Morality," *Saturday Review*, 40 (28 December 1957): 24;
- "Television and Newsmen," *Time* (2 November 1953): 49;
- "Television in Controversy: The Debate and the Defense," *Newsweek*, 43 (29 March 1954): 50-52.

HEADLINE MAKERS

JOSEPH AND STEWART ALSOP 1910-1989; 1914-1974

COLUMNISTS

NEWSWEEK-GEORGE TAMES



Inside Information. Syndicated in up to two hundred newspapers by the *New York Herald Tribune* from 1946 to 1958, Joseph Alsop and his brother Stewart were two of the most influential newspaper columnists of the 1950s. Earning sixty thousand dollars for their column and es-

pousing a hard line against the Soviet Union and communism, the Alsops used their contacts within official Washington, D.C., to report inside information on world affairs. The Alsops' column, "Matter of Fact," which appeared four times a week, provided, as Edgar Kemler in the *Nation* commented in 1954, the "only remaining pipelines into the National Security Council."

Impending Doom. Their column first appeared on 1 January 1946, the first in a long litany that predicted impending doom for the United States and the world. The Alsopian habit of making dire predictions garnered them many nicknames, including "the Brothers Cassandra," "disaster experts," "Old Testament prophets," and the "All-slops," the last given them by Sen. Joseph McCarthy.

Background. The Alsops came from an upper-class background, their mother being a niece of Theodore Roosevelt, a first cousin of Eleanor Roosevelt, and a sixth cousin of Franklin Roosevelt. The Alsop brothers possessed markedly different personalities. Joseph described himself as "ornate," and his manner was criticized by other commentators as arrogant. He kept his vow, made early in life, to insult at least one person a day. Stewart, on the other hand, was more pleasant and easygoing.

Predictions. Yet they shared a profound pessimism about world prospects which led to their dark predictions. Although they did not pretend infallibility, the Alsops

did have a respectable track record at interpreting trends in national and international politics. Their most notable predictions included the 1948 Communist coup in Czechoslovakia and their 1948 warning about an impending war in Korea. But some prognostications went awry. They predicted in 1948, along with many other commentators, that Thomas Dewey would defeat President Harry S Truman. They forecast that the United States would go to war with the Soviet Union in 1952.

Close to the White House. Despite the hit-and-miss nature of their column, the Alsops cultivated a close relationship with the White House, regardless of the occupant. Readers knew that by reading "Matter of Fact" they were reading the inside Washington scoop, filtered through the urbane, acerbic, and doom-struck writing of the Alsop brothers.

Sources:

Joseph Alsop and Adam Platt, *I've Seen the Best of It: Memoirs* (New York: Norton, 1992);

"Alsop's Fables," *Time*, 67 (18 June 1956): 66;

"Brothers in Arms," *Newsweek*, 50 (11 November 1957): 81-82;

Patrick Donovan, "Alsop's Fables for Our Terrible Time," *New Republic*, 139 (29 December 1958): 17-18;

Edgar Kemler, "Celestial Pipe Line," *Nation*, 178 (2 January 1954): 5-10;

Walter T. Ridder, "The Brothers Cassandra, Joseph and Stewart," *Reporter*, 11 (21 October 1954): 34-38.

HARRY ASHMORE

1916-

NEWSPAPER EDITOR



GREG VILLET. LIFE

New Breed. The winner of the 1958 Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing, Harry Ashmore, the editor of the *Arkansas Gazette* in Little Rock, was part of the new breed of southern newspaper editors in the 1950s that eschewed the narrow racial conservatism of previous eras in favor of religious and racial tolerance. Ashmore, Jonathan

Daniels of the *Raleigh (N.C.) News and Observer*, George Bingham of the *Louisville Courier-Journal* and *Louisville Times*, and Gene Patterson and Ralph McGill of the *Atlanta Journal* and *Constitution* were at the forefront of editors who took controversial stands as spokesmen for an enlightened South.

Background. Born in Greenville, South Carolina, and a 1937 graduate of Clemson College, Ashmore began his journalistic career that same year with the *Greenville Piedmont*. Following his service in the U.S. Army from 1942 to 1946, Ashmore was named associate editor of the *Charlotte (N.C.) News*. He succeeded to editor in 1947 and began writing editorials in favor of two-party politics, voting rights for blacks, increased funding for education, and racial harmony. Ashmore's editorials garnered national attention and gained for him an appointment in 1947 as the editorial-page editor of the *Gazette*. He was named executive editor in 1948.

Little Rock. Ashmore's tenure at the *Gazette*, which lasted until 1959, coincided with the most volatile period in the history of Arkansas race relations. In the wake of the 17 May 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision outlawing segregated schools, Little Rock Central High School was ordered to be desegregated. On 2 September 1957 Arkansas governor Orval Faubus sent National Guard troops to prevent nine blacks from attending the school. President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent federal troops in response. Ashmore's editorial on 4 September showed his basic philosophy in opposing resistance to integration:

Somehow, sometime, every Arkansan is going to have to be counted. . . . We are going to have to decide what kind of people we are — whether we obey the law only when we approve of it, or whether we obey it no matter how distasteful we find it.

Public Outcry. Governor Faubus labeled Ashmore "an ardent integrationist." The Capital Citizen's Council named him "Public Enemy Number 1." Despite falling circulation, from one hundred thousand to ninety thousand, Ashmore and the *Gazette* stood ground. By mid 1958 circulation had firmed, and Ashmore and the paper gained national recognition for their editorial position and reporting excellence. The Pulitzer committee credited Ashmore for "the forcefulness, dispassionate analysis and clarity" of his editorials. In also awarding the *Gazette* a Pulitzer for its reporting, the committee praised the paper under Ashmore's leadership for "demonstrating the highest qualities of civic leadership, journalistic responsibility, and moral courage in the face of mounting public tension."

Moral Courage. Ashmore was one of the southern editors who exemplified the moral courage that the civil rights movement demanded of those who took difficult positions in dangerous times.

Sources:
New York Times, 6 May 1958, p. 38;

"Southerner by Inclination," *Time* (21 April 1947): 52;
Time (21 April 1947).

MILTON BERLE

1908-

COMEDIAN AND ACTOR



The First Star. Milton Berle was television's first star and helped establish home television as an entertainment medium. Starting in the NBC comedy-variety series "Texaco Star Theatre" from 1948 to 1956, Berle became known as "Mr. Television." The popularity of his show, which aired every Tuesday evening at eight o'clock, helped secure an audience for the fledgling medium during its early years.

Vaudeville. Born in 1908 to show-business parents, Berle began performing professionally in vaudeville at the age of five, honing the skills as a comedian that prepared him for his radio and television career. Vaudeville was adapted to television as the variety show, and Berle was one of the first in television to take advantage of the public's familiarity with the form.

Show Format. The show was a live musical-comedy act with Berle acting as master of ceremonies and participant. Filled with sight gags, songs, dancing, comedy routines, jokes about current topics and New York City, and Berle's signature routine, dressing as a woman, the show was a manic sixty minutes written, scored, rehearsed, and broadcast for thirty-nine weeks a year. It was live television at its best and an example of why live television was so difficult to sustain. The show was popular from the beginning with both critics and audiences. Jay Gould of the *New York Times* called it television's "first smash hit"; the audience figures were startling.

New York Effect. In 1948 there were only half a million television sets in the United States, most of them in New York City. In the fall of that year "Texaco Star Theatre" achieved the amazing rating of 94.7, which meant that 94.7 percent of those half million sets were tuned into the show.

Ratings Decline. The audience in the late 1940s and early 1950s was disproportionately Jewish and urban, groups that identified closely with Berle, his style, and his comedic references. As the number of televisions grew and the audience expanded to include more rural areas, Berle's ratings declined from the unsustainable levels of 1948. Still, Berle commanded an immense audience, and he commanded a salary to match. In 1951 NBC was concerned that he might jump to another network and signed Berle to a thirty-year contract worth \$200,000 annually. But the show's rating continued to decline, and in 1956 it was canceled. Berle's contract was reduced to \$120,000 per year.

Mr. Television. After "Texaco Star Theatre" was canceled, Berle returned in 1958 with a new show on NBC. "The Kraft Music Hall" featured Berle until 1959, but the show lacked the freshness and energy of the earlier Berle vehicle. Though he never again reached the same level of success, Berle continued to be known as "Mr. Television" and to be revered for his early work in establishing television's dominant role in the popular culture of the 1950s.

Sources:

Goodman Ace, "Berle's Still Berling," *Look*, 17 (7 April 1953): 52-54; Alfred Bester, "The Good Old Days of Mr. Television," *Holiday*, 23 (February 1958): 97, 99-100, 102-103, 105;

Joel Edwards, "Behind the Scenes with Milton Berle," *Coronet*, 29 (April 1951): 83-87;

David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Villard, 1993).

WILLIAM M. GAINES

1922-1992

MAGAZINE PUBLISHER



Growth in Circulation. The publisher of the most unlikely magazine success story of the 1950s, William M. Gaines made *Mad* magazine a household name and an icon for American youth. The magazine, a compendium of satire and humor aimed at the high-school and college market,

grew from a circulation of 195,000 in 1953 to a level of 1.3 million in 1958. In 1959 *Mad* was chosen as the favorite magazine by 58 percent of college students and 43 percent of high-school students. The editorial rationale is that "anything, even death and destruction, can have a humorous side."

Background. Gaines began his publishing career when he inherited a comic-book publishing firm, Educational Comics, from his father in 1947. EC, as the firm was called, published a weak line of children's comics and by 1948 was one hundred thousand dollars in debt. In 1950 Gaines developed a new line of horror comics, the first two titled *The Crypt of Terror* and *The Vault of Horror*. The horror series, which expanded to seven titles, was tremendously successful and helped wipe out the EC debt by the end of 1952.

Mad Comics. In summer 1952 Gaines oversaw the development of the first EC humor comic, tentatively called *Mad Dog* but shortened by the time of the first issue to *Mad*. It was immediately successful and prosperous. The prosperity did not last, however. In 1953 comic books became the focus of a Senate investigation, led by Sen. Estes Kefauver, into juvenile delinquency. Horror comics were blamed for all sorts of juvenile crime, and the public responded by demanding comic-book regulation.

Comic-book wholesale distributors reacted by refusing to carry horror comics.

Censorship. Gaines saw that his livelihood was severely threatened. The comic-book producers formed the Comics Magazine Association (CMA) in 1954 to regulate the industry themselves rather than leave it to the government. The CMA decided to ban horror comics, a decision that greatly reduced the profits of EC Comics. In order to circumvent the comic-book censors, Gaines decided to change *Mad* from a comic-book format to a magazine format. In addition to using higher-quality paper, Gaines raised the price from ten cents to twenty-five cents. With the new format removing the threat of censorship, *Mad* reached new levels of popularity. By 1958 the magazine made a profit of \$43,000 per issue.

Unexploited Market. With *Mad* Gaines stumbled on an unexploited market of late adolescent and college age youth. Gaines and *Mad* were influential in identifying the youth market so expertly exploited by others in the 1960s and beyond. In his biography of Gaines, Frank Jacobs summarizes both the appeal and the controversy surrounding *Mad*:

Because it contains so many pictures, many people call it a comic. Because it appeals to so many youngsters, many people think it is not fit reading for adults. Because it assails both political fringes, it is damned by both of them. Because it attacks sacred institutions, it is called un-American. Because it refuses to print pornography, it is called square. Because it hits everything, it is accused of lacking a point a view.

Sources:

"Crazy Like a Fox," *Newsweek* (31 August 1959): 57;

Richard Gehman, "It's Just Plain Mad," *Coronet*, 48 (May 1960): 96-103;

Frank Jacobs, *The Mad World of William M. Gaines* (Secaucus, N.J.: Lyle Stuart, 1972);

"Maddiction," *Time* (7 July 1958): 63.

JACKIE GLEASON

1916-1987

COMEDIAN AND ACTOR



Meteoric Rise. Jackie Gleason enjoyed a meteoric rise in television during the early 1950s. From humble beginnings in Brooklyn, New York, Gleason worked his way to success through all kinds of show business jobs — at different times Gleason was a bouncer, carnival barker, radio disc jockey, and cabaret performer — before signing a one-year contract with Warner Bros. Pictures in 1941. After appearing in three movies for Warner Bros. and one for 20th Century-Fox in 1941 and 1942, Gleason returned to New York to

work on Broadway and in comedy clubs. He continued to work in clubs and at resorts for seven years, until he was signed in 1949 by the Du Mont television network to star in the adaption to television of the "Life of Riley" radio series.

"Cavalcade of Stars." After twenty-six weeks as Chester A. Riley, Gleason was named host of the Du Mont television show "Cavalcade of Stars." It was this show that Gleason used to hone the characters that made him a television institution. Ralph Kramden, the Poor Soul, Joe the Bartender, and Reginald Van Gleason III all made their television debuts on "Cavalcade of Stars." Gleason's presence raised the show's ratings from nine to thirty-eight in two years, garnering the attention of the other networks. The executives at CBS were especially interested in the fact that Gleason could draw such ratings on DuMont, a network without a nationwide audience.

Move to CBS. His contract with DuMont due to expire in 1952, Gleason approached CBS about signing with them. The contract was a blockbuster. CBS promised to cover the production costs for "The Jackie Gleason Show" — three hundred thousand dollars annually — and Gleason was promised a ten-thousand-dollars-per-week salary. Premiering 20 September 1952, "The Jackie Gleason Show" was in the top ten and had reached second place by 1954. The show's popularity in its Saturday night 8:00 time slot gained Gleason the nickname "Mr. Saturday Night."

New Contract. In 1954 Gleason canceled "The Jackie Gleason Show" in favor of a weekly half-hour broadcast of "The Honeymooners," a Gleason's skit that featured Brooklyn bus driver Ralph Kramden. The contract that produced the switch in shows was the biggest in television's short history. CBS agreed to pay Gleason a total of eleven million dollars for two years of shows, with an option for a third year. In 1956 Gleason began a thirty-minute "Jackie Gleason Show." He starred in shows that ran on the network in various forms until 1971.

Classic Comedian. During his television career Gleason was a bigger-than-life character. Not always consistent or reliable, Gleason was the classic television comedian. Jim Bishop, in his 1956 biography of Gleason, attempts to summarize the contradictions:

Gleason, I am convinced, has a king-sized soul. And a loud conscience. These, coupled with a body which was intended to enjoy all of the sensual pleasures, making for a disparate, sometimes desperate, character. He has a gargantuan appetite for food, women, music and charity. They do not all pull in the same direction.

Sources:

Jim Bishop, *The Golden Ham: A Candid Biography of Jackie Gleason* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956);

"Jack for Jackie," *Time* (3 January 1955): 52;

Eric Pace, "Jackie Gleason Dies of Cancer; Comedian and Actor Was 71," *New York Times*, 25 June 1987, pp. A1, B16;

Sally Bedell Smith, *In All His Glory: The Life of William S. Paley* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990).

MARGUERITE HIGGINS

1920-1966

NEWSPAPER CORRESPONDENT



War Correspondent. Marguerite Higgins was the most publicized newspaperwoman of the 1950s. Although a seasoned reporter from her experience during World War II — she was with Allied troops as they liberated the Dachau and Buchenwald concentration camps in 1945 — Higgins

first gained widespread public notice as a war correspondent during the Korean War.

Korean War. Higgins joined the staff of the *New York Herald Tribune* in 1942 and remained with the paper throughout her career. From 1946 to 1950 she served as Berlin bureau chief for the *Herald Tribune*. In 1950 she was transferred to Tokyo as chief of the Far East bureau just before the invasion of South Korea by North Korea. She arrived in Korea two days after the initial Communist invasion and remained near the front for much of the war, to the dismay of both Homer Bigart, the official *Herald Tribune* war correspondent, and the U.S. Army.

Feud with Bigart. For much of the war Higgins shared the front page with Bigart, both of them filing competing stories. The *Herald Tribune* often printed both dispatches. The relationship between the two reporters was competitive and tinged with bitterness. A colleague captured the flavor of the situation: "As soon as Homer kills off Maggie or Maggie kills off Homer the competition will wane and so will the coverage of the Korean War."

Discrimination. A more serious disagreement arose with the army. In July 1950 Lt. Gen. Walton H. Walker ordered Higgins back to Japan, saying that war was no place for a woman. In Japan Higgins immediately appealed the decision to Gen. Douglas MacArthur in language that foreshadowed the woman's movement of later decades: "I'm not working in Korea as a woman. I am there as a war correspondent." MacArthur returned her to Korea, this time as a worldwide sensation. For her exploits in Korea — and no doubt because of the publicity surrounding them — Higgins shared the Pulitzer Prize for international reporting given in 1951 with five other reporters, all of them men: Keyes Beech and Fred Sparks of the *Chicago Daily News*, Relmin Marin and Don Whitehead of the Associated Press, and Homer Bigart. She was also named 1951 "Woman of the Year" by the Associated Press.

Sources:

Marguerite Higgins, *War in Korea: The Report of a Woman War Correspondent* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1951);

"Last Word," *Time*, 56 (31 July 1950): 53;

Antoinette May, *Witness To War: A Biography of Marguerite Higgins* (New York: Beaufort Books, 1983);

Carl Mydans, "Girl War Correspondent: The New York Herald Tribune's Maggie Higgins Is Winning Battle of the Sexes on the Korean Front," *Life*, 29 (2 October 1950): 51-52, 54, 56, 59-60;

"Pride of the Regiment," *Time*, 56 (25 September 1950): 63-64.

HENRY R. LUCE

1898-1967

EDITOR AND MAGAZINE PUBLISHER



Magazine Empire. As the most powerful American media figure during most of the twentieth century, Henry R. Luce through his publishing empire dominated the magazine industry during the 1950s and wielded strong political influence. The cofounder (with friend and partner Briton Hadden) of

Time, the first modern news magazine, Luce affected the way in which many Americans received their news. His other magazine ventures, including *Fortune*, *Life*, and *Sports Illustrated*, helped secure a media empire that in 1959 grossed more than \$271 million.

Background. Luce's parents were Presbyterian missionaries, and he was born in China, where he lived until the age of fourteen. He arrived in the United States at age fifteen, enrolling at the prestigious Hotchkiss School in Connecticut. He met Hadden at Hotchkiss, working with him at the school newspaper and creating a journalistic vision they would continue to develop while at Yale University and afterward.

Launching *Time*. Luce and Hadden graduated from Yale in 1920. Luce first went to Oxford, then to work for Ben Hecht at the *Chicago Daily News*. In 1922 he rejoined Hadden, then a reporter at the *Baltimore News*. A year later the two resigned from the *News* to launch *Time*. Selling stock in the new enterprise, Luce and Hadden began the magazine in 1923 with an investment of eighty-six thousand dollars.

Hadden's Death. The first issue was dated 3 March 1923 and sold twelve thousand copies. Luce handled the business aspects of the operation, while Hadden was the editor. In 1929 Luce and Hadden planned the start of a business magazine, to be called *Fortune*. Before the first issue, however, Hadden died. Luce was shaken, but he persevered in putting out the first monthly issue, which appeared in February 1930. Its expensive one-dollar-per-copy price was unheard of. Despite the stock-market crash of the previous October and the incipient Depression, the magazine was a success.

Political Power. Luce continued to build his empire, expanding it into book publishing, radio- and television-station ownership, and television programming. But the media power of the Luce empire expanded inevitably toward political power. Luce was an ardent Republican and a staunch cold warrior. He used his editorial power at *Time* and *Fortune* to circulate his views on capitalism, labor, communism, and, especially, Communist China. His support of Chiang Kai-shek, the Chinese Nationalist leader, after World War II in the Chinese revolution influenced U.S. foreign policy for almost thirty years. He was regarded as controversial due to the stands he and his magazines took, but he never claimed to be totally objective. "Show me a man who claims he is objective," he once told an interviewer, "and I'll show you a man with illusions."

Launch of *Sports Illustrated*. The decade of the 1950s was the pinnacle of Luce's political influence. It was also the decade that saw Luce's last big magazine launch, that of *Sports Illustrated*. Although not a sportsman himself, Luce perceived a market for a recreation magazine in a postwar society that promised more leisure time. To prepare himself to publish such a magazine, Luce took courses in baseball, boxing, and horse racing. *Sports Illustrated* was an immediate success, with sales of 550,000 copies for its first issue, which was dated 16 August 1954.

International Influence. The raw numbers associated with the phenomenal success of Luce's media empire tend to understate his cultural import. The German magazine *Der Spiegel* summarized in 1961 Luce's influence in the United States and the world:

No man has, over the last two decades, more incisively shaped the image of America as seen by the rest of the world, and the American's image of the world, than *Time* and *Life* editor Henry Robinson Luce.

Every third U.S. family buys every week a Luce product; 94 percent of all Americans over 12 know *Time*. Luceferic printed products are the intellectual supplement of Coca-Cola, Marilyn Monroe and dollar diplomacy.

No American without a political office — with the possible exception of Henry Ford — has had greater influence on American society. Luce was the first — between the wars — to use the term American Century. Recently, at a party on board [Aristotle] Onassis' yacht *Christina*, Winston Churchill counted him among the seven most powerful men in the United States, and President Eisenhower, while still in office, called him "a great American."

Last of an Era. In a society entering a period of revolutionary change brought about by the new medium of television, Luce was the last U.S. print-media figure who commanded worldwide power.

Sources:

John J. Abele, "Publisher Stepped Down in '64 as Editor in Chief," *New York Times*, 1 March 1967, p. 33;

Noel F. Busch, *Briton Hadden: A Biography of the Co-Founder of Time* (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1949);

W. A. Swanberg, *Luce and His Empire* (New York: Scribners, 1972);

Alden Whitman, "Created the News Magazine," *New York Times*, 1 March 1967, pp. 1, 33.

EDWARD R. MURROW

1908-1965

TELEVISION NEWS REPORTER

GALE PICTURE GALLERY



Early Career in Radio. Edward R. Murrow virtually invented modern radio and television news. Renowned for his thoroughness, fairness, and curiously charismatic seriousness, Murrow began his career at CBS News in 1935 not as a broadcaster but as the CBS "director of talks," or educational programs. He served as CBS representative in Europe beginning in 1937; he began his radio broadcasting career by covering the forced merger of Austria with Germany in 1938, beaming reports of the entrance of German troops into Vienna. He gained notoriety for his dramatic radio coverage of the Battle of Britain. But his television documentary news programs, "See It Now" and "CBS Reports," made him a fixture of 1950s television. In the public eye Murrow became the very ideal of a television newsman and a prime source of the great reputation of CBS News.

Broadcaster. Not trained as a journalist or a broadcaster, it was those two fields which soon gathered his attention. In 1938 Murrow found himself in Vienna as Adolf Hitler sent troops to force a merger of Austria with Germany. Given a short deadline and with no experienced radio journalist available, Murrow made his first broadcast on 13 March 1938. The thrill of being in the midst of historic events and reporting their significance to the world captured Murrow's imagination.

The Battle of Britain. Murrow became a public figure through his broadcasts from London during the Battle of Britain, when the Nazi air force attempted to bomb England into surrender. During these radio reports he would sign on saying "This is London." The simple phrase, understated yet dramatic, became synonymous with Murrow. After the war Murrow was named vice-president of CBS for public affairs. He served in that post until 1947, when he returned to the air. "Hear It Now," which first was broadcast in 1950, was Murrow's most respected show on radio.

Suspicious of Television. Murrow was suspicious of television and thought it unsuited to serious journalism, but in 1951 he tried television when he was given the opportunity to adapt the radio program to the new medium. With Fred Friendly, his coproducer and collaborator, Murrow intended "See It Now" to make headlines,

not merely to report them. For the first six months, the show was broadcast at 3:30 on Sunday afternoon; its success in both the ratings and with the critics convinced the network to move the show to 6:30 P.M. As coproducer, narrator, and occasional interviewer, Murrow brought integrity and respectability to television news. The first show featured a report on the Korean War that followed the activities of Fox Company, Second Platoon, Nineteenth Infantry Regiment. The report was realistic in a way that World War II newsreels had not been. Murrow reported early in the segment that half the men seen were missing in action or had been killed or wounded since the filming ended. At the end of the segment, the platoon members turned to the camera and stated their names and hometowns. The association of names and faces with the violence of battle brought the war closer to home than the headlines of a newspaper.

Provocative Issues. With Murrow's approach the show was inherently topical and controversial. Examples of subjects covered included the tragedy of racial prejudice in the South, the turmoil surrounding nuclear physicist Robert Oppenheimer, and the controversy and fear concerning nuclear weapons. Television critic Gilbert Seldes called "See It Now" "the most important show on the air."

Joseph McCarthy. At no time was it more important than in March 1954, when it broadcast a show on Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy, then at the peak of his influence and popularity. Murrow used careful editing and his own personal outrage to highlight the cruelty and irrationality of the McCarthy Senate-sanctioned hunt for communists in the government. "See It Now" made a powerful and risky statement against McCarthy which helped bring that suspicious and paranoid era to an end.

Documentaries. In addition to "See It Now," Murrow worked on "Person to Person," a lighter television show of interviews with celebrities in their homes. He initiated "CBS Reports," a highly acclaimed series of hour-long documentaries. The most renowned of these was "Harvest of Shame," an exposé of the harsh conditions under which migrant laborers were exploited in American agriculture. He also hosted "Small World," a show which linked three people around the country by remote hook-ups and discussed general topics. One such show featured James Thurber, Siobhan McKenna, and Noel Coward on the nature of comedy.

Decline. But the pace of working nonstop for so many years and growing suspicion about the ultimately profit-oriented heart of television began to take its toll on Murrow. As the decade ended and after "See It Now" was canceled, he was a bitter man. While serving as director of the U.S. Information Agency in the John F. Kennedy administration, he was diagnosed with lung cancer. In 1965 he underwent an operation for a brain tumor and died on 27 April 1965. His career remains a model and a source of inspiration for serious television journalists.

Sources:

William Boddy, *Fifties Television: The Industry and Its Critics* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990);

Joseph E. Persico, *Edward R. Murrow: An American Original* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988);

Charles Wertenbaker, "The World on His Back," *New Yorker*, 29 (26 December 1953): 28-45.

WILLIAM S. PALEY

1901-1990

TELEVISION NETWORK EXECUTIVE



Tycoon. William S. Paley was the most dynamic tycoon in the television industry of the 1950s. As president and chairman of the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), Paley built a struggling radio network into a radio and television empire. No person had greater influence on the development of television, its broadcasting content, and its cultural power.

Early Career. Born in Chicago in 1901, Paley began his career in the Congress Cigar Company, which the Paley family owned. As vice-president of Congress, Paley contracted in the mid 1920s to advertise on the Columbia Phonograph Broadcasting System, a small struggling radio network headquartered in Philadelphia and owned by United Independent Broadcastings. His interest in broadcasting piqued, Paley bought United in 1928 for five hundred thousand dollars and renamed it Columbia Broadcasting System. By 1929 he had increased the size of the network from sixteen stations to forty-nine.

Programming Strategies. Paley continued to expand at CBS during the onset of the Depression and initiated broadcasting strategies that he would later carry to television. He scoured the hinterlands for little-known quality vocalists and musicians — Fats Waller, the Mills Brothers, the Boswell Sisters, and Kate Smith, among them — and brought them to radio. In 1931 he signed Bing Crosby to a fifteen-hundred-dollar-per-week contract to perform six times a week at 11 P.M. for fifteen minutes. He also signed to CBS many famous radio comedians, including George Burns and Gracie Allen, Jack Benny, and Fred Allen. When these did not put CBS at the top of the ratings, he bought stars from competitor NBC: Al Jolson, Nelson Eddy, and Maj. Edward Bowes were three that Paley lured to his network. Paley spared no expense in attracting the best and most popular performers to CBS.

Introduction to Television. Paley's introduction to television came during its experimental stage in the 1930s; CBS opened its first experimental station, WXAB in New York, on 21 July 1931. During the rest of the decade and through the mid 1940s CBS did little to develop its television franchise. CBS executive Frank Stanton later commented, "Before the war we did the

minimum to keep our television license. NBC was way ahead of us. [David] Sarnoff [NBC and RCA executive and founding father of broadcast television] was the visionary. He had the guts."

Buying Talent. After World War II Paley decided that the same strategy he had used in radio — buying talent — would also be successful in television. In the late 1940s CBS took out a \$5 million bank loan and used the proceeds to sign up many of NBC's television stars. Paley was able to offer on CBS television such established stars as Benny, Red Skelton, Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, Frank Sinatra, and Amos 'n Andy. The result was that CBS began to dominate the ratings, a domination that continued into the 1970s.

News. Under Paley's leadership CBS also gained a great reputation for its news division. The roots of this reputation were in the 1930s, when Paley oversaw the building of a radio-news division that proved its worth during World War II. The television news division later included such renowned newsmen as Edward R. Murrow, Eric Sevareid, William Shirer, Howard K. Smith, and Walter Cronkite. Paley took great pride in CBS News and believed it to be an important part of the overall success of the network. He did not flinch at the costs of maintaining a top-flight news gathering and reporting organization. In 1956 these costs were more than \$7 million.

Influence. Paley's brashness and boldness helped define the direction that television broadcasting took in the late 1940s and 1950s. His notions of quality became the standard for many viewers of television. Along with Sarnoff, Paley must be ranked as one of the two most influential figures in television history.

Sources:

"Good News and Bad News," *Newsweek* (7 January 1957): 64-65;

William S. Paley, *As It Happened: A Memoir* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1979);

Sally Bedell Smith, *In All His Glory: The Life of William S. Paley* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990).

DAVID SARNOFF

1891-1971

TELEVISION NETWORK EXECUTIVE



GALE PICTURE GALLERY

Background. Born in Minsk, Russia, David Sarnoff immigrated to America in 1900 to reside with his family in a tenement on New York City's Lower East Side. To support his family, nine-year-old David, the eldest son, almost immediately found work selling newspapers. Soon he had his first real job, as a five-dollars-a-week messenger boy. In 1906 he took a position with American Marconi, the American office of the first wireless-telegraph com-

pany, Marconi Wireless. As a telegrapher for Marconi, Sarnoff stayed at his post for three straight days after the sinking of the SS *Titanic* on 14 April 1912, receiving wireless transmissions of the names of the dead and survivors. The *Titanic* tragedy had the effect of boosting the infant wireless industry, which could communicate with vessels at sea.

Forming RCA. Sarnoff's fortunes rose with American Marconi's, and when the company merged with several others to form the Radio Corporation of American (RCA) in 1919, he was one of the conglomerate's junior executives. As an officer of RCA, Sarnoff was responsible for the company's change of emphasis from transoceanic communication to commercial radio broadcasting. To that end RCA established the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) in 1926, which offered entertainment and news to owners of "receiver sets" in New York City. Soon NBC was broadcasting nationwide over chains of transmitters that relayed radio signals far from their starting point.

President of RCA. Sarnoff became president of RCA in 1930. Over the next two decades the company entered the movie and phonograph industries, and NBC dominated radio entertainment. By the early 1940s Sarnoff was ready to lead his company into television, with which RCA had been experimenting for years. Sarnoff had seen enormous potential in the broadcasting of images as well as sound since the 1920s. World War II interfered with RCA's plans, however, and the company was not allowed to begin mass production of television receivers until 1946.

Color Television. In the 1950s Sarnoff strongly backed NBC's attempts to manufacture color television sets and to broadcast in color. He was successful in getting television sets approved by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that were "color compatible," meaning that they could pick up either black-and-white or color broadcasts. However, Sarnoff's corporate rival, William S. Paley of CBS, quickly overcame RCA's lead in manufacturing color sets and overtook NBC in television broadcasting. Sarnoff retired from RCA in 1970 and died a year later.

ED SULLIVAN

1902-1974

TELEVISION HOST



King of Variety Shows. Ed Sullivan was the king of variety shows in the 1950s. With his CBS shows the "Toast of the Town" and "The Ed Sullivan Show," Sullivan parlayed his expressionless manner and untelegenic face into a television institution.

Early Career. Sullivan first gained prominence in 1932 as the author of the "Little Old New York" column, which was published in the *New York Daily News* and syndicated to newspapers across the United States. The same year he began a radio variety show that was notable for broadcasting Jack Benny, Irving Berlin, and George M. Cohan, among others. In 1942 he began a network radio show on CBS called "Ed Sullivan Entertains."

Television Premiere. His premiere on television occurred without his knowledge. Sullivan was the master of ceremonies of the annual Harvest Moon Ball, a dance competition sponsored by the *Daily News* and held in Madison Square Garden. In 1947 CBS televised the competition without Sullivan's knowing about it. On the basis of his performance, Sullivan was engaged by CBS to become the host of "Toast of the Town." The hour-long variety show premiered on 20 June 1948 with Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis and Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II among the guest stars.

Network Moneymaker. For the first five seasons the show was popular, though not a consistent finisher in the twenty top-rated programs. By the 1954 season "Toast of the Town" was a common resident of the top twenty. Regardless of its place in the ratings, Sullivan's show was a prestigious moneymaker for CBS. In 1951 Lincoln Mercury, the sponsor of "Toast of the Town," paid CBS over \$2.2 million to advertise on the show for one year. Sullivan was also well paid, receiving \$125,000 a year in 1951. Sullivan was amazed at the money figures associated with him and his show, musing in *Time* in 1951 that Rodgers and Hammerstein had appeared on the premiere of "Toast of the Town" for \$270.

Critic's Disbelief. If Sullivan was amazed at the monetary success of the show, critics were incredulous that Sullivan's wooden personality could gain the following of such a large audience. John Crosby in the *New York Herald Tribune* described him as "totally innocent of any of the tricks of stage presence." Sullivan himself said, in one of his better-known lines, "when I walk on the stage I apparently look as if I'd just been embalmed." His hunched shoulders, his greeting, and his promise to the audience every week that he had "a really big shew" became the stuff of comedy routines across the country.

Importance of Talent. But the secret of Sullivan's success on "Talk of the Town" and "The Ed Sullivan Show," as it was known from 1955, was his ability to choose and attract performers to appear. He introduced many performers to television in the 1950s, including Bob Hope, Lena Horne, Jack Benny, and, most famously, Elvis Presley. On Elvis's second appearance on the show, Sullivan demanded that the camera show Elvis only from the waist up, so the singer's gyrating hips would not offend Middle America.

Continued Success. The "Ed Sullivan Show" continued in its Sunday 8:00 P.M. time slot until 1971, when Sullivan retired. By that time it had become the most

popular television variety show in history. Its host was one of the most recognizable and popular figures in television.

Sources:

Richard B. Gehman, "Ed Sullivan: TV's Miracle Man," *Coronet*, 31 (8 March 1952): 53-58;

Philip Hamburger, "Variety," *New Yorker*, 30 (18 December 1954): 89-91;

"The Toast of the Town," *Time* (25 June 1951): 49-50;

"Why Ed Rates High," *Newsweek*, 36 (21 December 1953): 82-83.

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Samuel Blackman was named general news editor of the Associated Press in December 1958.

Dick Clark hosted the national premiere of his "American Bandstand" music show on ABC on 7 October 1957.

In 1957 Nat King Cole became the first black performer to have his own television show. Because southern stations threatened a boycott, no national advertiser could be found, and the show was canceled in 1958.

After eight years on the show, Dorothy Collins and her husband, Raymond Scott, were dropped from "Hit Parade" in February 1957.

John Denson was named editor of *Newsweek* on 22 July 1956.

In 1954 Roscoe Drummond was hired from the *Christian Science Monitor* to be the Washington bureau chief for the *New York Herald Tribune*.

Pauline Frederick was hired in 1953 as an NBC news correspondent. Her hiring opened many career doors for women.

Radio disc jockey Alan Freed hosted the first prime-time television special featuring rock 'n' roll music on 4 May 1957.

Radio and television personality Arthur Godfrey underwent surgery for lung cancer on 30 April 1959.

In 1951 graphic designer William Golden conceived the CBS Eye as the network symbol.

Sen. Robert Hendrickson (R-New Jersey), chairman of a Senate subcommittee investigating the impact of televi-

sion on juvenile violence, urged the government to regulate television content.

Rosel Hyde, a member of the FCC, testified on 20 October 1954 that censorship of television by the government would be "dangerous and undemocratic" and called for an industry-appointed "czar" to police televised violence.

The *New York Times* published on 14 February 1950 an exclusive interview by Arthur Krock with President Harry S Truman. Other news reporters were furious at the exclusivity, but Krock won a Pulitzer Prize for the interview.

Louis R. Lautier of the *Atlantic Daily World* became the first black member of the National Press Club in February 1955.

Walter Lippman, Joseph and Stewart Alsop, Howard K. Smith, and Edward R. Murrow were presented Overseas Press Club awards on 29 March 1954.

Boston University president Daniel Marsh told graduating seniors on 4 June 1950 that "if the television craze continues with the present level of programs, we are destined to have a nation of morons."

In July 1950 Daniel D. Mich was named editorial director of *McCall's* magazine.

William N. Otis, an Associated Press correspondent, was sentenced in March 1951 to ten years' imprisonment for espionage by Czechoslovakian officials.

Syndicated newspaper columnist Drew Pearson was punched up by Sen. Joseph McCarthy at a Washington cocktail party on 13 December 1950.

Newspaper columnist Westbrook Pegler and two Hearst firms are ordered by a federal jury to pay \$175,000 to writer Quentin Reynolds in settlement of libel charges.

Gerald Pill, editor of *Scientific American*, revealed in March 1950 that thirty thousand copies of the magazine were burned at the behest of the Atomic Energy Commission because it contained technical data on the H-bomb that Pill said already had been published elsewhere.

In May 1955 Ogden Rogers Reid succeeded his brother Whitelaw Reid as editor of the *New York Herald Tribune*.

On 13 March 1950 NBC barred singer and leftist Paul Robeson from appearing on a television special starring Eleanor Roosevelt.

RCA chairman David Sarnoff filed a statement on 6 June 1955 with the FCC opposing subscription television service.

CBS news commentator Eric Sevareid was awarded an Alfred I. duPont award for public service in radio and television broadcasting on 24 March 1955.

In July 1950 Prof. Walter A. Steigleman, after five years of research, reported that the stress of newspaper editorial work reduced life expectancy by one to three years.

CBS president Frank Stanton barred quiz-show programs from his network on 16 October 1959 in reaction to the scandal concerning quiz shows.

Margaret Truman debuted as a radio actress on 26 April 1951 in a NBC radio adaption of the film *Jackpot*.

Pat Weaver, creator of "The Today Show," became the president of NBC in December 1953. He served in that post until December 1955.

In 1958 John Hay Whitney bought the *New York Herald Tribune*.

AWARDS

EMMY AWARDS

1950

Best Sports Program: "Rams Football" (KNBH)

Best Variety Show: "The Alan Young Show" (KTTV, CBS)

Best Dramatic Show: "Pulitzer Prize Playhouse" (KECA-TV)

Best News Program: "KTLA Newsreel"

Most Outstanding Personality: Groucho Marx (KNBH, NBC)

1951

Best Dramatic Show: "Studio One" (CBS)

Best Comedy Show: "Red Skelton Show" (NBC)

Best Variety Show: "Your Show of Shows" (NBC)

Special Achievement Award: U.S. senator Estes Kefauver, for outstanding public service on television

1952

Best Dramatic Program: "Robert Montgomery Presents" (NBC)

Best Variety Program: "Your Show of Shows" (NBC)

Best Public Affairs Program: "See It Now" (CBS)

Best Mystery, Action, or Adventure Program: "Dragnet" (NBC)

Best Situation Comedy: "I Love Lucy" (CBS)

Most Outstanding Personality: Bishop Fulton J. Sheen (Dumont)

1953

Best Dramatic Program: "U.S. Steel Hour" (ABC)