

Neera:

Jim Fasilis is asking for federal funding for the new public television program "HALL PASS." I spoke with people in the Department of Education about various funding opportunities. Charlotte Gillespie, Program Service Team Group Leader, said that Dept. of Ed. can fund up \$500,000 for such a program, but there is an application process. To receive an application or more information, Jim Fasilis should contact Charlotte Gillespie @ (202) 260-1862.

-Mike

Neena -

Would you please suggest the
for response

Shirley

NIGHTLY BUSINESS REPORT

Produced by NBR Enterprises/WPBT2

P.O. Box 2 • Miami • Florida • 33261-0002

VOICE:305.949.8321 FAX:305.949.9772

www.nightlybusiness.org

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DETERMINED TO BE AN
ADMINISTRATIVE MARKING
INITIALS: PLCR DATE: 04/19/13
2013-0436-5

May 26, 1999

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mrs. Clinton:

President Clinton's comments from the Rose Garden on May 20th moved us deeply. He talked about the vulnerability of our young people; how too many children leave school at 3:00pm with no where to go or no adult to talk with; and the need for the spirit of America to triumph in these troubling times.

We in public television want to help. And we at Nightly Business Report, one of public television's showcase programs, have an idea. We have created "HALL PASS," a half hour public television series that is aimed at young adults (age 9 to 17). On our own, we have produced three episodes of the series so far. But since we are a non-profit entity, we need Government financial assistance to continue and thus respectfully seek your guidance.

A.) The shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado and Heritage High School in Conyers, Georgia call for someone to start shaping the morale fiber of America's youth in a positive manner. Someone to start giving our teens hope for the future on a continuous basis. And that's what HALL PASS can do. Its focus is to help teens build their self-esteem; to expose them to positive role models; to give them advice that will prepare them for the "real world." It is an educational "survival guide" presenting valuable information to help teenagers become better citizens by building their confidence to participate in school and community activities and take a more positive outlook on life. This all adds up to them being less likely to participate in dangerous behavior.

B.) Everyone in the country, including public television, needs to start making a new commitment to teens. And with HALL PASS, we can bring the series' valuable messages immediately to America's young adults. Plus this series can be a pioneering step that will pave the future for even more positive teen programming.

Television's #1 Daily Business News Program.

C.) At the public television fall Marketplace we had 151 public television stations signing up for HALL PASS. They saw the need for this type of positive programming for teens in their local markets. They want it to start in September which corresponds with the start of the new school year. Program directors envisioned this series running immediately after school, thus filling the 3:00pm void that President Clinton spoke of.

D.) All the major teen magazines (i.e. *Teen People*, *Twist*, *16*) want tie-ins (i.e. monthly columns, exclusive feature stories). Plus we have endorsements from some major educational groups (i.e. American Association of School Administrators, Jump\$tart Coalition).

Mrs. Clinton, we respectfully request that your staff examine the HALL PASS public television concept (sample programs and detailed booklet are attached) and pass it along with an endorsement to a Government funding agency. Let's take advantage of America's current need to help our young adults. Let's show America that people do care and are immediately ready to help in shaping the future of our teens.

Thank you for listening to our idea. And we pray for your assistance in an ongoing project that can produce positive results for our youth.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim Fasilis". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Jim Fasilis
Vice President of Marketing

An Exciting New TV Concept...





A Half-Hour Weekly Series For Public Television.

Produced by Information Television Network (ITV) in association with
Nightly Business Report Enterprises/WPBT.

★ What is it?

HALL PASS is an upbeat and fun look at life for young adults. It's a new "survival guide" aimed at this growing market, that educates and entertains with positive role models and a positive outlook on life. It talks to "Generation Next" in a language they know and understand – be it dealing with real life issues such as setting goals, overcoming obstacles, obtaining advice on personal finance matters, coping with rejection, helping friends or family harmony. Each episode has interviews with today's hottest celebrities, rock stars, and sports figures, with underlying educational messages.



★ Program Content

HALL PASS fits perfectly into a public television station's goal of providing programming to meet the entire community's needs. That's because **HALL PASS** is a unique new concept . . . a program targeted at the elusive American teenage viewers. In a recent study by the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center, only one in ten parents think there are a lot of good television programs for young people. And less than a third of teen programs were evaluated as high quality.

★ **HALL PASS Is Educational:** Each half-hour program in this 13-part series is a learning experience for teens. Each program becomes an educational "survival guide" presenting valuable information to help a teenager build the confidence to participate in school and community activities plus take a more positive outlook on life. **HALL PASS** focuses on teaching today's young people about self-esteem, personal happiness, a sense of self-worth and what to expect when they go out into the "real world." That means they will be less likely to participate in dangerous behaviors.

★ **HALL PASS Is Entertainment:** In each episode, **HALL PASS** hosts and correspondents will interview celebrities on location from the worlds of music/movies/television/sports. These guests will serve as role models, informing our viewers about everything from handling peer pressure to saving for college to health tips to career choice stories to anti-drug messages. Its fast paced, upbeat style, catchy music and fun approach is engaging and inviting. That's why we strongly believe that **HALL PASS** is "edutainment."

★ Program Format

To meet the entertainment needs of young adults, each program utilizes a modular, magazine format. Various "departments" will be visited. And this variety will make for a lively, interesting half hour. Some of the departments include:

★ BODY & SOUL

Nutrition issues such as Understanding Fat Grams... Fitness topics such as Re-Hydration and How To Dress For Sports. Peer pressure topics like Drugs, Drinking and Smoking. Current events like The Environment.

★ BIZNESS

Fascinating feature segments that look at personal finance issues such as Creating A Credit History, Saving For College, Taxes And Teens, How To Ask For A Raise, Teens Who Start Their Own Businesses, How To Make A Major Purchase, Understanding The Stock Market and much more.

★ TIME ZONE

There's always something to do as we take a look at the issues involving Careers, Room Decorating, Volunteer Work, School, Parties, The Arts and much more.

★ CENTS-ABILITIES

Quick graphic-based advice related to personal finance tips for young adults: Should You Lend A Friend Money?, Managing Your Own Credit, What To Do If You Lose Your ATM Or Credit Card, Getting Your First Job.

★ PLUGGED IN

See how video games, computers, the Internet, and electronic innovations help to entertain, educate and shape lives.

★ ROLE MODELS

In-depth look at celebrities from the worlds of TV, Sports, Movies, Music, and Theatre who will share their perspectives on life and on success.

★ HALL MONITOR ON PATROL

Interesting "man-on-the-street" interviews such as Why Do Guys Say I'll Call You And Don't? What's The Best Way To Break Up With Someone? Why Is It So Hard To Ask A Girl Out Even When You're Pretty Sure She's Going To Say Yes?

★ PEOPLE, PLACES & THINGS

Fascinating behind-the-scenes stories which uncover unique talents, including backstage tours, and spotlight many different and interesting aspects of life.

★ TOOLS & RULES

Tips related to various subjects such as Going to the Doctor, Self Esteem, Grooming, Fashion, Body Language, Manners, Sticky Situations, Beauty, How To Do Laundry, The Importance Of Reading, Nail Biting and much more.

★ The Hosts

Casting for **HALL PASS** was mega-fun. The producers searched for talent, energy and personality-plus; teens who would be equally at ease at the mall, or hanging out with the hottest celebrities. And, most important of all, they looked for talent that young adults could respect and relate to. There were call-backs and more call-backs. And when the cast was finally chosen, these very talented few made the final cut.



PAULO Benedetti

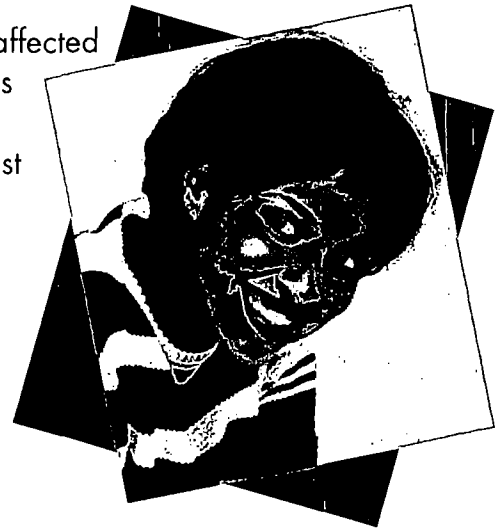
Watch his star rise. Paulo has the charm and attitude of a natural born leader. His charisma and star power makes him a sure winner. Paulo's rugged good looks make him a favorite among the girls while guys can relate to his strong athletic presence. His high energy and fun-loving attitude are extremely contagious.

This 22-year-old Colombian native grew up in Florida. A professional model, Paulo's television credentials include playing the role of Jesse Blue on the award-winning soap opera *Guiding Light*.

SAGINE Archer

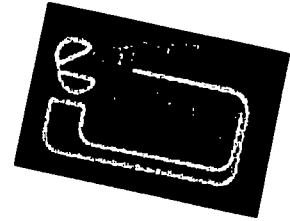
This girl next door is a sensible, fresh and unaffected individualist. Her self-assured manner makes her the perfect partner for Paulo. Sagine is fun-loving, yet practical, making her the cast member all the others go to for advice.

This 21-year-old model/actress has been highlighted in ads by Revlon, Procter and Gamble and *Women's Day* magazine.



★ A Co-Production

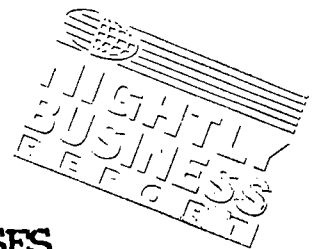
★ Produced by...



INFORMATION TELEVISION NETWORK

This multi-faceted television production company specializes in producing educational and informative television programs. ITV is well-known for its quality work on science and health programs. It's centerpiece production is the highly-respected *The Cutting Edge Medical Report*. This series received the highest international honor in the field of medical film and television production, the coveted Freddie Award from the American Medical Association. ITV has most recently launched a compelling new series titled *The Cutting Edge Technology Report: TECHNO 2100*.

★ In association with...



NIGHTLY BUSINESS REPORT ENTERPRISES

Celebrating its 20th anniversary, the award-winning *Nightly Business Report* is television's #1 daily business program. It is one of public television's key signature series, airing on 277 stations. With studios and news bureaus in New York and Miami, the NBR Enterprises staff is known for high quality production, exciting graphics, and excellence in journalism. NBR Enterprises also produces *Morning Business Report*, *Nightly Business Report News Brief*, and three highly successful *Jonathan Pond* personal finance pledge specials.

★ Viewer Profiles

HALL PASS was created with teens in mind. The primary audience is young adults, age 12 - 17. The program's talent, story content and presentation techniques are targeted to this core audience.

But **HALL PASS** also has three additional audiences which were identified in the test marketing phase. The secondary audience reaches into the pre-teen years (ages 9, 10, 11). This was verified by key public television program directors.

A tertiary audience is the post high school ranks. Students at community colleges and universities plus high school graduates starting their working careers will also find the program captivating.

A fourth audience will also add adult viewers. Older friends, relatives, parents, and teachers will find **HALL PASS** intriguing, entertaining and educational.



★ Test Marketing

HALL PASS has been tested. Sample episodes were aired last fall in over a dozen markets across the country. Air times included after school and Saturdays. Ratings ranged from 1.5 to a 2.9 during the test period. Stations, TV column critics, and viewers were highly receptive. Here's a sampling of their comments.

"HALL PASS is hip, fun, and educational. It makes me want to be a teenager again!"

KMSO, Fresno, California

"We like how the show positions current issues to teens in a positive and upbeat manner."

WEIL, Champaign, Illinois

"The hosts are doing a great job. The segments are wonderful."

WCCB, Charlotte, North Carolina

"The show is great! Everybody loves it!"

WTVE, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

"HALL PASS is a well orchestrated, bright and engaging show. It's an excellent addition to any station's FCC-friendly line up."

WKOW, Madison, Wisconsin

"This is a much needed and desired program among our young adults. We feel that if our country is to survive these financially complex times, we must have programs such as HALL PASS to serve as models."

**Dara Duguay
Executive Director
Jump\$tart Coalition**

★ Teen Survey

Last fall over 500 teens across the country were given a written description of **HALL PASS**. Researchers then asked them three key questions.

Q How likely would you be to watch **HALL PASS**?

A **88% definitely or very likely.**

Q How often would you watch?

A **86% at least once per week.**

Q When would you watch?

A **44% after school;
33% weekday evenings;
48% weekends.**



★ Fan Mail

An additional testimonial to the drawing power of **HALL PASS** are the public relation tie-ins it is generating. A monthly advice column in *16 Magazine* has resulted in a steady flow of fan mail, with the bulk of it asking for the air times of the television program in their local market. And, *Teen People* and *Twist* magazines also have an ongoing relationship with **HALL PASS**. This means there will be constant print communications with publications that are respected and read by young adults. Communications that will act as powerful tune-in reminders.

"This was the first time I've ever seen your show . . . and it was great!"

"What station in Indy would HALL PASS be on?"

"I love all your tips."

"Could you please tell me when it's on?"

"You have great ideas."

"Any plans to air HALL PASS in Houston?"

"Does HALL PASS air in Michigan?"

"When does HALL PASS come to Virginia?"

"Do you have a Member Club?"

"What time does HALL PASS air in Philadelphia?"



★ Online Activities



The **HALL PASS** website is being expanded due to the high interest and usage by young adults. Plans call to list the television carriage stations and airdates; to do expanded stories on the topics covered in each broadcast; "chats" with the hosts and special guests; etc.

★ Public Relations

All episodes of **HALL PASS** will be closed captioned. Our national underwriters will thus be seen as special corporate citizens who care about America's deaf and hard-of-hearing young adults, as well as supporting an educational program whose mission is to build a teen's self-esteem and better prepare him or her for adulthood.

"Tune-in" postcards with the national underwriters' logos will be furnished to carriage stations. They can then add their local air times and send these out to their viewers. Stations will also receive special PR photo kits for them to highlight **Hall Pass** in their monthly viewer magazines and arrange for publicity stories with their local media contacts.

National PR plans call for continuous press coverage in national newspapers and magazines. **HALL PASS** already has monthly tie-ins with several teen publications. Additional "columns" will be sought. Also television talk show and radio interviews with the programs stars will be arranged.



★ Start Date

Production on **HALL PASS** has already begun. Segments are being shot all over the country. Initial airings are scheduled to begin at the start of school in September, 1999 and the new fall television schedule.

★ Broadcast Policy

All public television stations will receive the programs free-of-charge. They will be allowed to air each episode in the 13 part series, as many times as they wish, over the initial 12-month period.



REFERENCES





FACT: ☒ Public Television continues to be seen by more viewers than any cable network. (Source: Nielsen Cable Activity Report Weekly Cumulative Viewing Households)

	Households	As % of US TVHH	Ave. Primetime Rating
Public TV	56,100,000	58.7	2.2
A & E	20,900,000	21.9	0.7
Discovery	26,700,000	28.0	0.7
Nickelodeon	29,100,000	32.2	1.0
The Learning Channel	9,700,000	10.2	0.2

FACT: ☒ An overwhelming majority of the Public Television audience does not watch Discovery, A&E, or CNN. PBS thus adds an unduplicated audience of influential, well-educated decision makers.

(Source: Nielsen Duplication Analysis, February 1996)

	Total HH	A25-54	A35-64
PBS Viewers who don't watch Discovery	62%	68%	68%
PBS Viewers who don't watch A&E	64%	71%	70%
PBS Viewers who don't watch CNN	70%	79%	77%

FACT: ☒ In the most recent Roper poll comparing Public TV with cable and the commercial broadcast networks, Public TV scored ahead of the others on five key "personal enrichment" qualities:

	Public TV	Cable	Commercial Networks
Educational	63%	30%	16%
Informative	42%	31%	27%
Stimulating	21%	17%	8%
Important	24%	15%	17%
Imaginative	20%	17%	8%

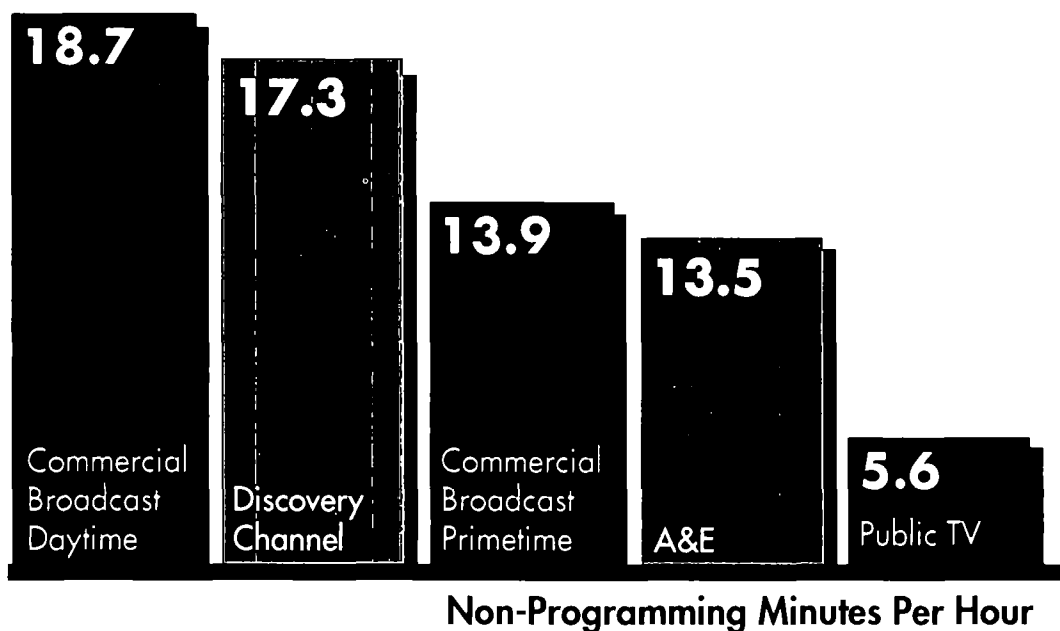
FACT: ☒ PBS can be seen in 99% of American homes. The most widely-distributed cable networks are available to only 70%.

(Source: Nielsen December 1997)

FACT: ☒ Public Television is one of the most powerful media brands, second only to Disney in brand differentiation and personal value.

(Source: Young & Rubicam's 1995 "Brand Valuation Estimator")

FACT: ☒ Public Television provides an uncluttered broadcast environment versus cable:



FACT: ☒ **"HALL PASS"** will be on Public Television, delivering all of the above listed advantages.



"Don't Get Caught
Without It!"

T^V ALLOWANCETM

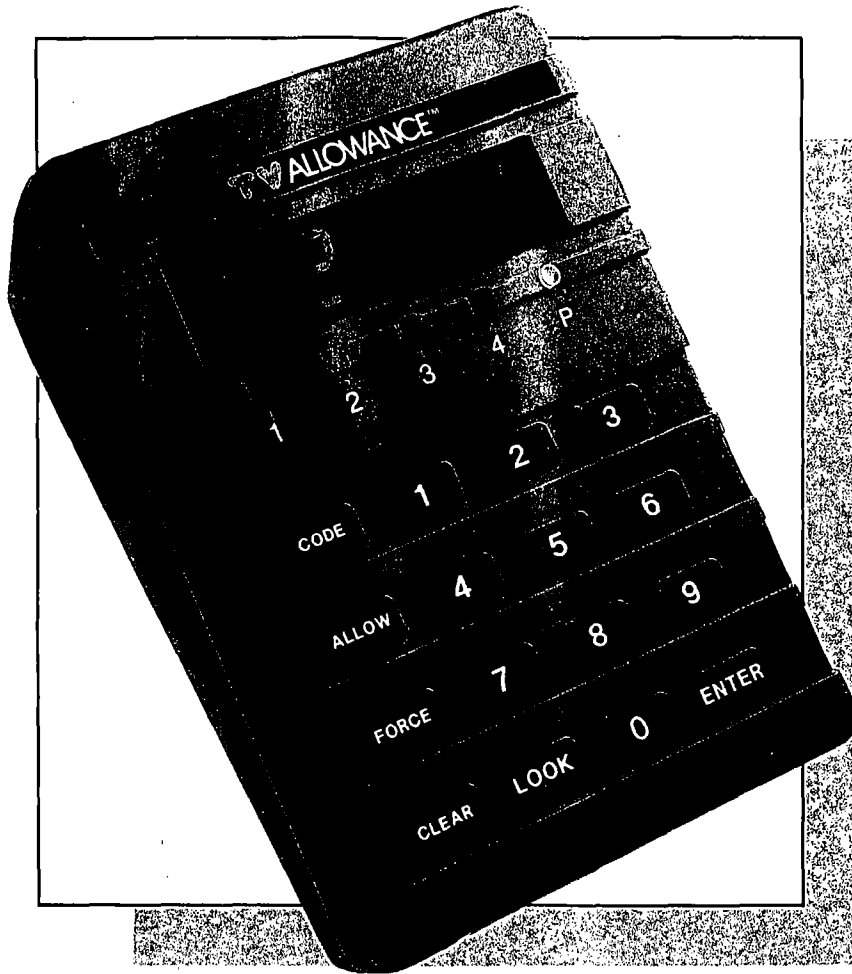
TELEVISION TIME MANAGER

No more
arguments
about T.V. and
video games

It really works!
Kids can't cheat!
We Guarantee it.

AS SEEN ON:

- The Oprah Winfrey Show
- CBS This Morning
- NBC Today Show
- ABC Home Show



PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

TAKE BACK THE TUBE!

Introducing the **T^V ALLOWANCETM** — the Television Time Manager, a quality device designed to limit the amount of time children watch television/video games. Now parents may use the **T^V ALLOWANCETM** to set weekly allowable time for T.V. or video games for each child, therefore reducing the negative influence of too much T.V. in the home.

GIVE YOUR KIDS AN EDGE

The use of the **T^V ALLOWANCETM** can lead to better reading skills, better grades and richer activities for children. The **T^V ALLOWANCETM** encourages children to evaluate television programs and make wise viewing choices. Children learn valuable time management skills.

MADE IN THE USA

TV ALLOWANCE™

TELEVISION TIME MANAGER

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TAKE BACK THE TUBE!

Introducing the **TV ALLOWANCE™** — the Television Time Manager, a quality device designed to limit the amount of time children watch television/video games. Now parents may use the **TV ALLOWANCE™** to set weekly allowable time for T.V. or video games for each child, therefore reducing the negative influence of too much T.V. in the home.

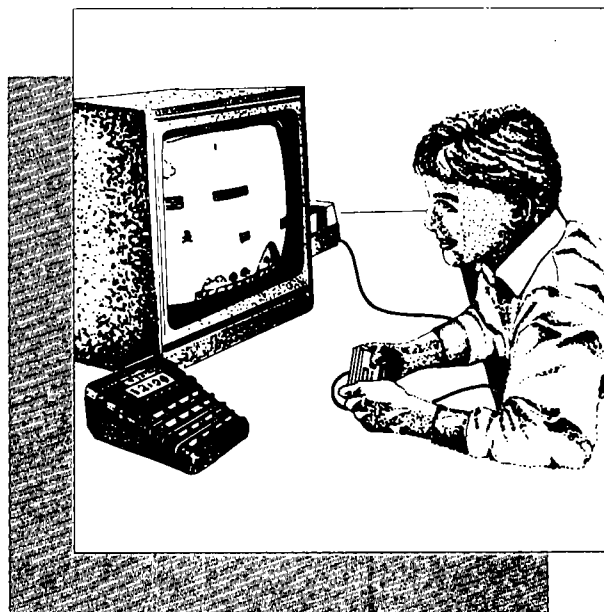
GIVE YOUR KIDS AN EDGE

The use of the **TV ALLOWANCE™** can lead to better reading skills, better grades and richer activities for children. The **TV ALLOWANCE™** encourages children to evaluate television programs and make wise viewing choices. Children learn valuable time management skills.

MADE IN THE USA

HOW IT WORKS

Simply plug the T.V.'s power cord into the locking compartment of the **TVALLOWANCE™**. Insert three AAA batteries, lock the compartment door and plug the **TVALLOWANCE™** power cord into any wall outlet. It's as easy as that! The parent and child then decide on the amount of time to be allowed for viewing each week. Using a master code, the parent programs the **TVALLOWANCE™**. Each child (up to four) receives a four digit code which is used to access the T.V. As each child uses their own code to view a program, their particular account is debited for each minute of viewed time. If all the time in the account is used up, the television shuts off and will not turn on for that child's code until the following week when the account automatically rolls over and gives your child the next allowance. *IT REALLY WORKS!*



- Easy to use
- Does not interfere with VCR, cable or remotes.
- High quality electronic components
- High impact case and sturdy construction to stand up to heavy family use
- LED readout for clear viewing under low light conditions
- High quality 4 color packaging
- UPC coded
- FCC approved
- UL listed
- Battery back-up
- 3AAA batteries required

Model #100

UPC #7 49447 10000 2

	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Master Carton</u>
Quantity	1 piece	12 pieces
Weight	2 lbs.	28 lbs.
Dimensions	8 x 6 x 4	19 x 17 x 8

OTHER FEATURES

- A LOOK button that allows the child or parent to check the time remaining in his or her account.
- A SAVE function so the child can accumulate his or her allowance from week to week, building up credit towards a reward.
- A MASTER code, used not only for programming the **TVALLOWANCE™** but also for parent, babysitter and special family viewing.
- A BLOCK ability that can be used to block out certain time periods (i.e., homework hours or late night offensive programming).

The **TVALLOWANCE™** works with video games, VCR and television.

TVALLOWANCE™

MADE IN THE U.S.A.

The New York Times

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, MAY 23, 1993

Styles of The Times

THING

Elizabeth Kolbert

The TV Allowance

Are your children idling in front of the tube? A meter can help you enforce the parking rules.

WHAT: TV Allowance, nicknamed the TV chastity belt. Think of it as a parking meter for your kids' brains.

HOW: To turn on the set, each kid punches in his or her personal four-digit access code. The TV Allowance, which looks like an oversize calculator, then subtracts the amount of time spent in front of the tube from the child's weekly allotment. When the allotment is exhausted, the kid flicks on the set and — nothing happens!

WHY: You've tried bribing them. You've tried threatening them. You've even tried reasoning with them. But still, every night, there's a ring around the set.

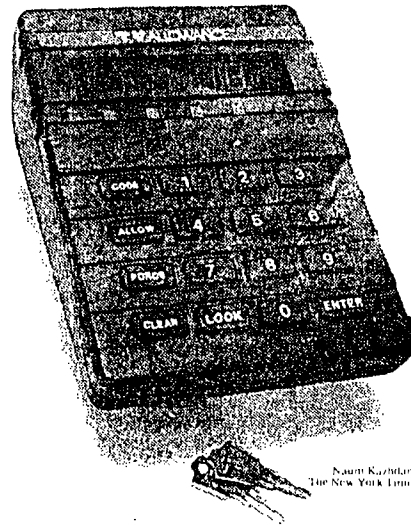
WHY NOT: Your children don't have enough reasons to hate you already?

INSPIRATION: Randal Levenson, a photographer who lives in South Miami, Fla., invented the device because he was being "driven crazy" by his three children. Mr. Levenson allows each of his children — two boys, 13 and 11, and a girl, 6 — to watch four hours of television a week. For each hour that they don't use up — the TV Allowance has a rollover feature — the Levenson children receive \$1.

SPECIAL FEATURES: In addition to limiting the total amount of television your children can watch, you can also set up blackout periods when it is impossible for them to turn on the set. These might include the air time for HBO's "Real Sex."

WHAT ABOUT ME? Though parents also have to punch in an access code to turn on the television, there is no limit, or record, of how much time they spend glued to the tube.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS: The way Mr. Levenson describes it, TV Allowance is not just a gadget that cuts



Naomi Karndorf
The New York Times

down on your children's television viewing. It is also, he says, "an educational device" that teaches them the benefits of cooperation; by watching television together, they find they can double, or in larger families, even triple their hours in front of the tube. What's more, according to the parents' manual, TV Allowance helps "your child learn valuable lifelong skills like time management" and "how to save against a rainy day."

MORE POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS: Imagine the Soviet Union before vodka rationing. Then imagine it after.

COST: \$99 for the first device and \$79 for each additional one. (Each television requires its own.) Orders can be placed by calling (800) 231-4410.

SECURITY: A lock and key mechanism insures that your children cannot cheat the system simply by unplugging the TV Allowance. But enterprising types may want to test each of the 10,000 possible access codes to figure out the one that turns on the television for an unlimited time. In the end, the only thing that stands between them and temptation is one panel of high-impact plastic.

USA TODAY

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1994

Inventive answer: An automatic allowance

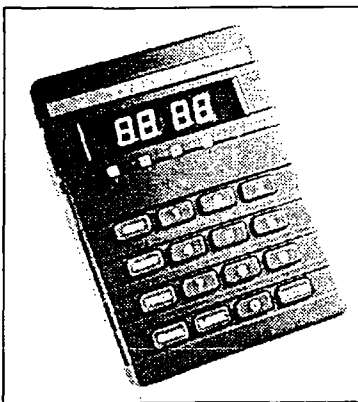
By Brooke Stauffer
Special for USA TODAY

"This is not an authoritarian device. It's something that helps kids take control of their own lives."

Miami inventor Randal Levenson is talking about his \$99 device called TV Allowance, which monitors the amount of time children can spend in front of the tube.

TV Allowance is one of several TV rationing devices on the market. This one resembles a calculator with a keypad on the top and a locked door on the bottom. Unlock the door, plug the TV power cord into the receptacle there, lock the door again and plug TV Allowance in. The display lights up, and the device instructs a user on how to set viewing times and select a four-digit master code.

Each child gets a separate code and an assigned number of hours of viewing time. They punch in their personal codes to watch TV.



TV ALLOWANCE: The \$99 device assigns each child a code.

When a child's ration is used up, the set turns off.

A photographer by trade, Levenson got tired of arguing with his own three kids — ages 6 to 13 — about what they could watch on TV and how often.

"I'm not an anti-TV guy," Levenson says. "But I didn't want to spend my time arguing."

A life-long tinkerer, Levenson started wondering if he could use technology to solve his family's television hassle. TV Allowance took two years to perfect, and reflects the suggestions of parents who tried out prototypes.

"We've made it as much carrot and as little stick as possible," Levenson says. "It's the same philosophy as giving kids an allowance. They get so much money per week, but decide for themselves what to spend it on. If they blow all their TV time on Monday, that's it till Sunday midnight, when it gives them their next weekly allowance automatically."

Each child in the Levenson household gets four hours per week. The TV Allowance also can bank unused hours.

More info: 800-231-4410. Cost: \$99, plus \$6 shipping and handling.

The TV Allowance™ gives parents the ability to limit their children's viewing time on a weekly basis. At the same time it teaches children valuable time management skills and encourages them to make wise choices about programming.

Parent and child discuss the amount of time to be allowed for viewing each week. Using a four digit Master code, parents give each child (up to four children) their own four digit access code and weekly allowance of viewing time.

To watch television, VCR or play video games the child must enter their four digit code. The allowance is then reduced by the amount of time the television is on.

Once the child uses their weekly allowance the television will not turn on for that code. At the beginning of the new week the child's allowance is automatically renewed.

OTHER FEATURES INCLUDE:

- A LOOK button that allows the child to check the time remaining in his/her account.
- A SAVE function so the child can accumulate his/her allowance from week to week, building up credit towards a goal and reward.
- A BLOCK ability that can be used to block out certain time periods such as homework hours, late night, etc.
- A MASTER code, used not only for programming the TV Allowance™, but also for parent, babysitter, and special family viewing.
- Easy installation - The T.V. power cord plugs in and is locked into the TV Allowance™.
- A battery backup in case of power outages.

The TV Allowance™ works with VCR's and video games and does not interfere with cable or remote control functions.

THE COST OF THE TV ALLOWANCE™ IS \$99.00.

Please add \$6.00 shipping & handling. Florida residents must add \$6.44 State Sales Tax.

TO ORDER TV ALLOWANCE™:

Call: 800-231-4410



Or send check to:

TV ALLOWANCE™
5605 SW 74TH STREET, #21
SOUTH MIAMI, FL 33143

(Please include Name, Address, and Phone number when ordering by mail)

"(Cheers) to a new gadget every parent will appreciate...."
- TV Guide

"Here's a cheatproof way to curb their tube time...."
- Fortune Magazine

"... a far more ingenious solution."
- Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

TV ALLOWANCE™

TELEVISION TIME MANAGER

TV ALLOWANCE™

LED readout for clear viewing under low light conditions.

High quality electronic components.

High impact case and sturdy construction to stand up to heavy family use.

60 day unconditional money back guarantee.

Full one year warranty.

TV ALLOWANCE™
is a trademark of the
TV Allowance Co., Miami, FL 33156
Patents pending. Made in the U.S.A.
For use with televisions only.
3 AAA Batteries required
110-130 Volts AC 60 Hz
50-350 watts



TV ALLOWANCE™

TELEVISION TIME MANAGER

5605 SW 74TH STREET, #21
SOUTH MIAMI, FL 33143

TV ALLOWANCE™

TV ALLOWANCE™

TELEVISION TIME MANAGER

TV ALLOWANCE™



Give your kids the code to success

Reduce the negative influence of too much T.V. and Nintendo in your home. The use of **TV ALLOWANCE™**, the Television Time Manager, can lead to better reading skills, better grades and to richer activities.

Teaches budgeting skills

Encourages children to evaluate television programs and make wise viewing choices. Kids won't watch the commercials. Teaches children the value of their time

TTMV ALLOWANCE

TELEVISION TIME MANAGER

No more
arguments
about T.V. and
video games

It really works!
Kids can't cheat!
We Guarantee it.



AS SEEN ON:

- The Oprah Winfrey Show
- CBS This Morning
- NBC Today Show
- ABC Home Show

TAKE BACK THE TUBE!

Introducing the **TTMV ALLOWANCE** — the Television Time Manager, a quality device designed to limit the amount of time children watch television/video games. Now parents may use the **TTMV ALLOWANCE** to set weekly allowable time for T.V. or video games for each child, therefore reducing the negative influence of too much T.V. in the home.

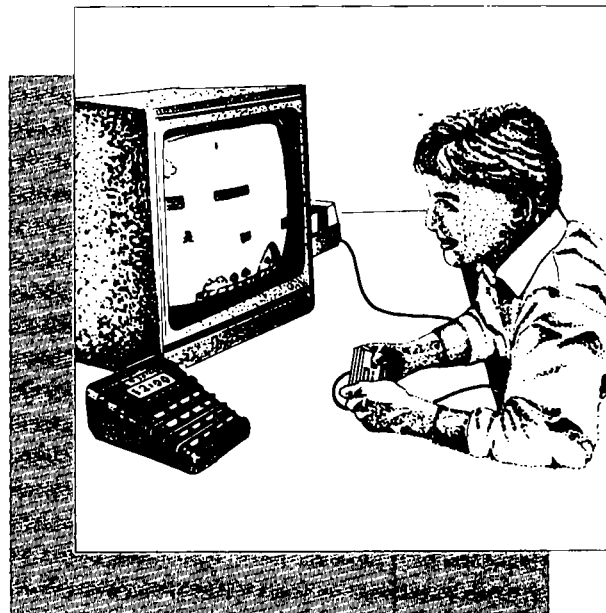
GIVE YOUR KIDS AN EDGE

The use of the **TTMV ALLOWANCE** can lead to better reading skills, better grades and richer activities for children. The **TTMV ALLOWANCE** encourages children to evaluate television programs and make wise viewing choices. Children learn valuable time management skills.

MADE IN THE USA

HOW IT WORKS

Simply plug the T.V.'s power cord into the locking compartment of the **TVALLOWANCE™**. Insert three AAA batteries, lock the compartment door and plug the **TVALLOWANCE™** power cord into any wall outlet. It's as easy as that! The parent and child then decide on the amount of time to be allowed for viewing each week. Using a master code, the parent programs the **TVALLOWANCE™**. Each child (up to four) receives a four digit code which is used to access the T.V. As each child uses their own code to view a program, their particular account is debited for each minute of viewed time. If all the time in the account is used up, the television shuts off and will not turn on for that child's code until the following week when the account automatically rolls over and gives your child the next allowance. *IT REALLY WORKS!*



- Easy to use
- Does not interfere with VCR, cable or remotes.
- High quality electronic components
- High impact case and sturdy construction to stand up to heavy family use
- LED readout for clear viewing under low light conditions
- High quality 4 color packaging
- UPC coded
- FCC approved
- UL listed
- Battery back-up
- 3AAA batteries required

Model #100

UPC #7 49447 10000 2

	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Master Carton</u>
Quantity	1 piece	12 pieces
Weight	2 lbs.	28 lbs.
Dimensions	8 x 6 x 4	19 x 17 x 8

OTHER FEATURES

- A LOOK button that allows the child or parent to check the time remaining in his or her account.
- A SAVE function so the child can accumulate his or her allowance from week to week, building up credit towards a reward.
- A MASTER code, used not only for programming the **TVALLOWANCE™** but also for parent, babysitter and special family viewing.
- A BLOCK ability that can be used to block out certain time periods (i.e., homework hours or late night offensive programming).

The **TVALLOWANCE™** works with video games, VCR and television.

TVALLOWANCE™

MADE IN THE U.S.A.

The New York Times

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, MAY 23, 1993

Styles of The Times

THING

Elizabeth Kolbert

The TV Allowance

Are your children idling in front of the tube? A meter can help you enforce the parking rules.

WHAT: TV Allowance, nicknamed the TV chastity belt. Think of it as a parking meter for your kids' brains.

HOW: To turn on the set, each kid punches in his or her personal four-digit access code. The TV Allowance, which looks like an oversize calculator, then subtracts the amount of time spent in front of the tube from the child's weekly allotment. When the allotment is exhausted, the kid flicks on the set and — nothing happens!

WHY: You've tried bribing them. You've tried threatening them. You've even tried reasoning with them. But still, every night, there's a ring around the set.

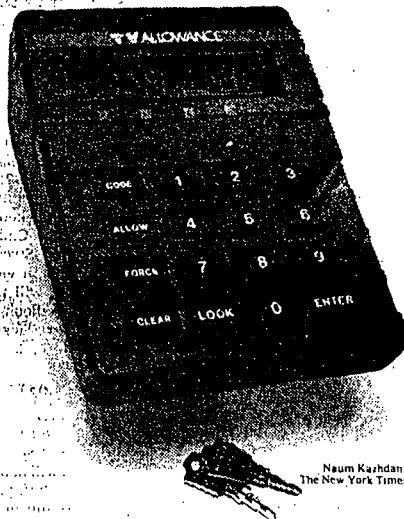
WHY NOT: Your children don't have enough reasons to hate you already?

INSPIRATION: Randal Levenson, a photographer who lives in South Miami, Fla., invented the device because he was being "driven crazy" by his three children. Mr. Levenson allows each of his children — two boys, 13 and 11, and a girl, 6 — to watch four hours of television a week. For each hour that they don't use up — the TV Allowance has a rollover feature — the Levenson children receive \$1.

SPECIAL FEATURES: In addition to limiting the total amount of television your children can watch, you can also set up blackout periods when it is impossible for them to turn on the set. These might include the air time for HBO's "Real Sex."

WHAT ABOUT ME? Though parents also have to punch in an access code to turn on the television, there is no limit, or record, of how much time they spend glued to the tube.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS: The way Mr. Levenson describes it, TV Allowance is not just a gadget that cuts



Naum Kazhdan/
The New York Times

down on your children's television viewing. It is also, he says, "an educational device" that teaches them the benefits of cooperation; by watching television together, they find they can double, or in larger families, even triple their hours in front of the tube. What's more, according to the parents' manual, TV Allowance helps "your child learn valuable lifelong skills like time management" and "how to save against a rainy day."

MORE POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS: Imagine the Soviet Union before vodka rationing. Then imagine it after.

COST: \$99 for the first device and \$79 for each additional one. (Each television requires its own.) Orders can be placed by calling (800) 231-4410.

SECURITY: A lock and key mechanism insures that your children cannot cheat the system simply by unplugging the TV Allowance. But enterprising types may want to test each of the 10,000 possible access codes to figure out the one that turns on the television for an unlimited time. In the end, the only thing that stands between them and temptation is one panel of high-impact plastic.

SAY WHAT?

Overheard at Sega

Street Fighter Update

Well, here it is August and Street Fighter fans are wondering when they'll be able to start pounding their new six-button controllers. OK, here's the latest word from the "Street": Sega and Capcom decided to make the game even better, so Capcom is currently working on a 24-meg "Tournament" version, with additional features that will be available only for the Genesis. Of course there's always a trade-off, so while the final game will be worlds better, we'll all have to wait a little longer. Current availability date looks to be around September, so hang loose and keep those thumbs supple.

TV Allowance

Sneaking in after-hours video gaming just got harder with TV Allowance. This pesky little device looks like a calculator but works like a prison guard, controlling the amount of time you spend in front of the television each week. Parents use a master code to program a set amount of TV time. When time is up, the television shuts off. We're definitely not going to ask for this for Christmas. Suggested retail price is \$99. What we want to know is, why'd they make these things so cheap?

Computer Camp

Looking for something cool to do this summer? Try computer camp. We all get ideas for video games, but without the proper background they're just ideas. Computer camp could give you that important first step in the industry, and provide you with valuable knowledge that could help you develop the next Sonic. And you get to do all that in a natural environment. What more could you want? Remember that Spielberg went to film school before he ever made a movie.

Do You Have Something In Stripes?

New York, Paris, London, Eastern Oregon Correctional Institute? Prison has just introduced itself to the fashion industry. These guys aren't stamping license plates or making many little rocks out of big rocks, they're sewing! Prison Blue jeans are made by hardened prisoners in Oregon — clothing originally intended for prisoners has escaped and found its way to the closet of innocent citizens. Made of 100% preshrunk cotton, they retail at about \$20.

Raptor Bites

We thought we had seen everything until we ran across this Jurassic Park candy. These little cherry jawbreakers might be small, but they have a wild flavor and you get hundreds of them in each

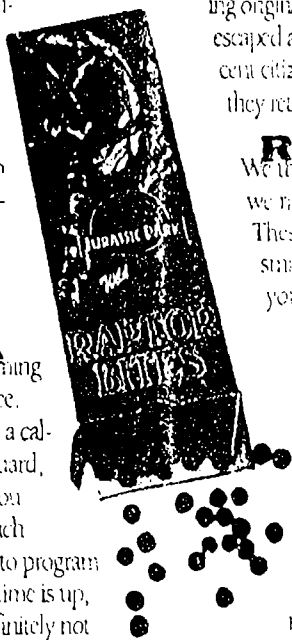
box. What more can you say about candy that's been 65 million years in the making?

New This Issue

Sports fans and younger gamers (you know who you are) will want to check out the two new sections we're kicking off in this issue: *Sports Playbook* and *VizKidz!*

Sports Playbook will cover sports titles for Genesis, Sega CD and Game Gear systems. We'll give you the lowdown on what's hot — and what's not — about each game in every type of sport. We're kicking off this issue with a special Sports Roundup, covering virtually every Genesis sports title — past, present and future.

VizKidz! is for those who want more of everything, more passwords, more secret codes, more hot hints and tips. If you like a little extra help getting through a game, turn to *VizKidz!* Check out the passwords and secret codes for *Tiny Toons*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and *Sonic 2* in this issue.



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Family

STYLE TV Allowance

Dad's invention rations tube time

By MARK GAUERT
Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel

Randal and Rusty Levenson didn't want the TV. He was a freelance photographer, she restored artwork for museums. They were busy. They had plenty to do.

But when the first child, Moss, came along 14 years ago, they started to worry. Worry that their bright-eyed 2-year-old was going to miss something without TV. Worried, like so many other parents, that their child would grow up a misfit. A kid the others wouldn't play with because he didn't know Big Bird, Bert and Ernie. A kid other kids would laugh at.

So they bought a TV, back when they lived in New York. They set it up high in a cabinet. So high the 2-year-old couldn't reach the dials. Couldn't turn it on, couldn't change the channels. And they let him watch "Sesame Street."

So he'd know Big Bird, Bert and Ernie. In time, though, he watched other things. Not necessarily educational. Cartoons. Animal adventures. Pro wrestling.

Sometimes, Randal admits, he and Rusty didn't know what was on. Sometimes, he says, you need to get the kitchen cleaned or the laundry done. Sometimes the only way for that to happen is for the kids to be busy. Preferably someplace else. So slowly, show by show, the TV became a baby-sitter.

Years passed, and Randal and Rusty had a second boy, Cormac, and, a few years later, a girl, Geddes. They moved to South Dade, Fla.

Somewhere along the way, the growing kids figured out how to use the TV on their own. They'd turn it on in the morning, it would run through the day. They started playing video games on it, too.

Randal and Rusty hadn't wanted the TV. They thought they were doing what was best for their children. Now it was stealing them. "TV and Nintendo are very attractive," Randal says, "and the attraction is just too strong."

They tried yelling at the kids, trying to break them free. "Turn the TV off," Randal and Rusty would say. "Go outside and play." They said it so many times, Randal says, it began to mean nothing to the children. That's just dad, the kids would say, being a meanie.

He was tired of yelling at them. Tired of being the meanie. He wanted more for his children than TV.

He remembered when he was a kid, outside of Boston. He remembered, back then, how "you kind of entertained yourself." He read books. Tinkered with cars. Played baseball in pickup leagues.

Sure, they had a TV back in the mid-'60s. A big one in a blond-colored cabinet with a tube that glowed green. When he watched too many Westerns on TV, his dad would reach around back and yank out one of the tubes.

Now he was the dad. And he got to



KRT Laserphoto

Randal Levenson has sold thousands of his invention, a device that allots TV time.

worrying what kind of people his kids were going to become. What kind of pleasure they would take from a life learned not by doing, but by watching.

"Finally," he says, "I said, 'That's enough.'"

He'd always made toys for the kids. He'd studied electrical engineering at school, had built them things like little cars and super soakers, and a "ghost trap" with blinking lights and popping sounds, just like the one they'd seen in "Ghostbusters."

He went to the electronics store and bought wires and connectors and circuit boards. He spread them across his workbench.

And he invented a device that allows parents to limit the amount of time the kids can spend in front of the TV. Each child gets a code he can use to turn the TV on. Each could watch whatever he wanted, until his "TV allowance" ran out.

He remembers the day three years ago he sat down with the kids and asked them how much time they thought they'd need to watch their programs

Device lets child 'bank' TV time week to week

By MARK GAUERT
Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel

Randal Levenson has sold thousands of his invention, called the "TV Allowance." In almost 2 1/2 years, he and his family have appeared on "The Oprah Winfrey Show," "CBS This Morning," NBC's "Today Show," and ABC's "Home Show." The invention has been written up in The New York Times, USA Today, Working Mother and Pediatric News.

Using the device, which sits atop the TV, parents can set the number of hours a child can watch TV. The child then must punch in his own four-digit code to turn the TV on.

The device keeps track of how much time the child has watched, and lets the child "bank" time week to week. Parents have to use a code to turn the TV on, too, but they have unlimited access.

Levenson says the device, which looks like an oversized calculator, was field-tested by dozens of kids before it was introduced on the market. It's made tough, he says, and a lock and key keep kids from defeating the system by unplugging it.

The device costs \$99, and works on only one television. You can buy additional units for \$79 each. Orders can be placed by calling 1-800-231-4410.

See TV, Page 5-B

TV

from Page 4-B

each week. Half an hour for Bart Simpson, they said, another half an hour for "In Living Color," some time for professional wrestling.

"It was about 3½ hours, really," Randal says, "So I said, 'OK, I'm your dad, I love you, you can have four hours of TV a week.'"

They thought that was wonderful, he says.

Then they quickly realized how little time four hours really is.

"After a while they said, 'You know, in that half hour of TV, you really only get about 22 minutes of show. The commercials take up the rest.'"

They were mad, Randal says, but, interestingly, not at their parents. They were mad at themselves because they hadn't saved enough time to watch "The Simpsons" all the way through.

Suddenly, the kids had a lot of time to fill when the TV ran out. "They'd come up and say, 'Well, if you're not going to let me watch TV, you're going to have to play with me,'" Randal says.

Randal and Rusty were prepared for that. With Legos, Rusty says. They're great for younger children. Chess. Card games like Crazy Eights and Go Fish. Books.

As they got older, they got the kids involved in volunteer activities, such as helping out with Special Olympics.

"You've got to be more of a parent," Rusty says, "because you have to come up with ideas for them to do.

"But it's worth it," she says, "because they get a life."

The three kids have changed, Randal and Rusty say. They've started thinking about organizing their time. Taking responsibility.

The device has even taught them business ethics.

"One would save TV time then sell it to the other kids," Randal says. "If the kid reneged on the deal, the other kids would know never to do business with him again."

It was hard, especially on the two older boys, who had more of the TV habit, Randal says. But, within a year, they hardly missed it.

Now, three years later, the boys, ages 14 and 12, read or play in the neighborhood. The girl, now 7, is always making something, Randal says. She's learning French.

He smiles. "I wish I had the energy and directedness she has when she's doing something."

He never meant his invention to be an authoritarian box. He wanted something flexible. Something the kids could learn from, on their own. He learned something, too — that a lot of other parents were looking for a similar solution.

With help from a partner, he tinkered until he got his workbench-sized device down to the size of a lunchbox. Then to about the size of a desktop calculator. Now he's selling them, mostly through an 800 number.

"The smoke hasn't cleared on whether we're going to make it economically, but it's still been good for my kids."

Some day, he thinks, his kids will know he did it because he loves them. Some day when they're older.



Knight-Ridder

Levenson's invention can be ordered through an 800 number

How to obtain 'TV Allowance'

Yesterday, the Star ran a story about Randal Levenson's invention, a device called the "TV Allowance" that allows parents to allot television time to children, but we omitted the telephone number.

You can obtain further information or place an order by calling (800) 231-4410. The device costs \$99, and works on only one television. You can buy additional units for \$79 each.

Levenson has sold thousands of devices since he was profiled in the Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel almost 2½ years ago.

Using the TV Allowance, which sits atop the television, parents can set the number of

hours a child can watch TV. The child then must punch in his own four-digit code to turn the TV on.

The device keeps track of how much time the child has watched, and allows the child to "bank" time from week to week. Parents have to use a code to turn the TV on, too, but they have unlimited access.

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Dad's electronic gizmo doles out 'TV allowance' to kids

By Mark Gauert
Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel

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But when the first child, Moss, came along 14 years ago, they started to worry. Worry that their bright-eyed 2-year-old was going to miss something

Each child gets a code he can use to turn the TV on. Each could watch whatever he wanted, until his "TV allowance" ran out.

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He remembered when he was a kid, outside of Boston. He remembered, back then, how "you kind of entertained yourself." He read books. Tinkered

See TV, Page 4C



Knight-Ridder

Randal Levenson says his TV-viewing monitor has changed his and his children's lives

TV

Continued from Page 1C

with cars. Played baseball in pickup leagues.

Sure, they had a TV, back in the mid-'60s. A big one in a blond-colored cabinet with a tube that glowed green. When he watched too many Westerns on TV, his dad would reach around back and yank out one of the tubes.

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Randal Levenson

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Pediatric News

Vol. 28, No.4

The Leading Independent Newspaper for the Pediatrician

April 1994



If you can't eliminate television in your home, consider a compromise. There is now available a device that restricts the viewing hours of TV addicts to reasonable limits. What limits? You determine that.

The monitor is easily attached to the TV and each viewer is given a code number that allows him or her to view the monitor for an allotted (preprogrammed by you) period of time.

It's called "TV Allowance," although certain other individuals who shall be nameless call it the "TV Terminator." The device costs about \$100 and may well be the best investment you ever make. (No, I have no financial interest in it, but in this day and age you were right to be suspicious.) Call 1-800-231-4410 for details.

You all know my feelings about TV and its devastating effect on this country and our youth. If even one of you does something about it I will feel rewarded.

PARENT TALK

SUNDAY, MAY 15, 1994/DETROIT FREE PRESS 3J

*Parents keep
their small
fry from
becoming
couch
potatoes*

Turned off to TV

Parents' concerns about TV violence are being heard by all kinds of jittery network and political types. The networks don't want to lose your viewership. The politicians don't want to lose your vote.

And manufacturers don't want to lose your dollars. Witness something called Parental Control, a device

that can be programmed to block certain channels. It's available on some new televisions and as an option through cable service. (Call your cable operator for more details.)

Or what about TV Allowance, a box which tracks the number of hours the set is on? It's available as a

**Technology
chips away
at TV
violence**

television accessory. (It's \$99 plus shipping and handling from Mind Master Inc. Call 1-800-231-4410, anytime.)



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1994

Inventive answer: An automatic allowance

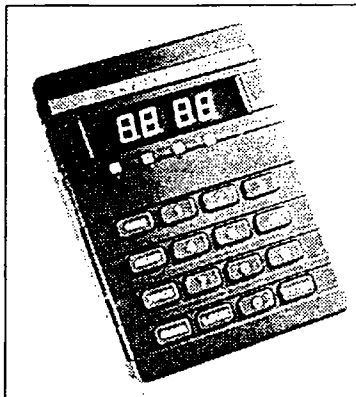
By Brooke Stauffer
Special for USA TODAY

"This is not an authoritarian device. It's something that helps kids take control of their own lives."

Miami inventor Randal Levenson is talking about his \$99 device called TV Allowance, which monitors the amount of time children can spend in front of the tube.

TV Allowance is one of several TV rationing devices on the market. This one resembles a calculator with a keypad on the top and a locked door on the bottom. Unlock the door, plug the TV power cord into the receptacle there, lock the door again and plug TV Allowance in. The display lights up, and the device instructs a user on how to set viewing times and select a four-digit master code.

Each child gets a separate code and an assigned number of hours of viewing time. They punch in their personal codes to watch TV.



TV ALLOWANCE: The \$99 device assigns each child a code.

When a child's ration is used up, the set turns off.

A photographer by trade, Levenson got tired of arguing with his own three kids — ages 6 to 13 — about what they could watch on TV and how often.

"I'm not an anti-TV guy," Levenson says. "But I didn't want to spend my time arguing."

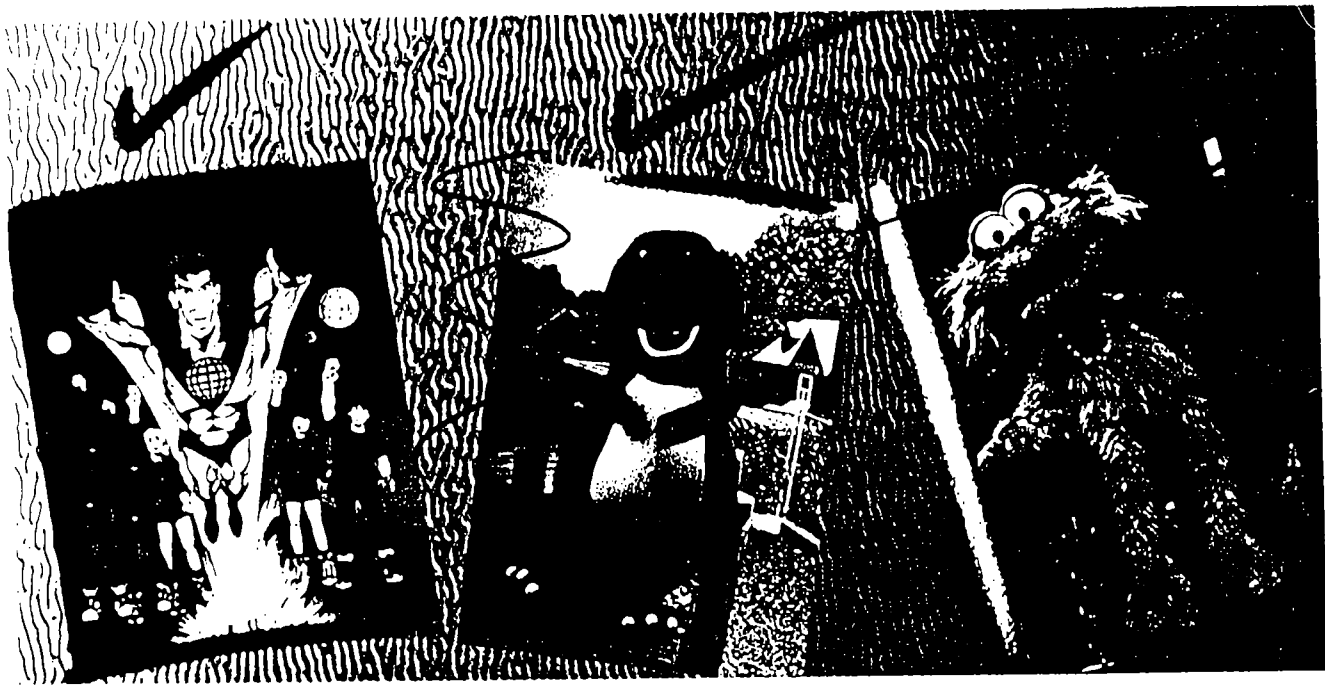
A life-long tinkerer, Levenson started wondering if he could use technology to solve his family's television hassle. TV Allowance took two years to perfect, and reflects the suggestions of parents who tried out prototypes.

"We've made it as much carrot and as little stick as possible," Levenson says. "It's the same philosophy as giving kids an allowance. They get so much money per week, but decide for themselves what to spend it on. If they blow all their TV time on Monday, that's it till Sunday midnight, when it gives them their next weekly allowance automatically."

Each child in the Levenson household gets four hours per week. The TV Allowance also can bank unused hours.

More info: 800-231-4410. Cost: \$99, plus \$6 shipping and handling.

Working Mother
February 1994



TV Guidance

Channel your child's viewing habits
in a positive direction

Monitoring Viewing Time

Although some parents eliminate the problem of too much TV by throwing away the set, most prefer to try to ration their kids' TV consumption. But enforcing those limits can be especially challenging if you are at work or out for the evening (and the kids are home alone or with a babysitter).

To the rescue: Devices designed to help you enforce the rationing rules in your absence. Here are some options (check kids' stores for others):

- **TV Allowance** (\$99 plus shipping, 1-800-231-4410). To turn on the set, the child punches in his or her personal access code. Then this device, which resembles an oversize calculator, subtracts the amount of time the child spends in front of the TV from his or her weekly time allotment. When the child uses up his or her TV "allow-

ance" for the week, the television shuts off and will not turn on for that child's code until the following week. The device also has a blocking ability that can be used to block out certain time periods (such as homework hours or late-night sex programs).

- **VCR Guard** (\$3 includes shipping, 1-800-752-9755). Closes over cassette entry opening and locks with a key to keep unauthorized tapes out of children's view. Also serves to keep toddlers' fingers from exploring/breaking the videotape slot.

- **Cable Controls**. Most cable companies now offer parents the option of "blacking out" certain channels—check with your local company. Many new television sets also allow you to "lock out" channels via simple reprogramming of the remote control.

**Kick the
TV habit**
Page 3.

FREE

Parents

The Monthly Newspaper for Philadelphia-Area Parents

EXPRESS

SEPTEMBER 1994

Back to School 1994

Don't kill your TV, control it

■ **TV Allowance.** Allows parents to program how much time up to four children can watch each week. Each child receives a four-digit code to turn on the set. As they watch, their accounts are "debited." When the time limit is reached, the TV shuts off. \$99, plus shipping. Call 800-231-4410.

Richard Marini is a freelance writer.

The Tastiest Light Cheese • Why Wrinkle Creams Are Looking Better

HEALTH

OCTOBER 1994 • \$2.95

LESS STRESS NOW

YOU REALLY CAN

Buy an electronic TV-rationing machine.

TV Allowance. each family member gets a numerical code to punch in on a digital display to activate the TV. Again, the holder of the master code programs the number of hours per week. Available at some electronics stores or call 800/231-4410. Cost is \$99.

A SPECIAL ISSUE



MARCH 1994

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE
FOR TODAY'S PARENTS

AGE-BY-AGE
ADVICE ABOUT
YOUR CHILD NOW
PAGE 125

child

HOW TO RAISE A NICE KID...

It Takes More
Than Love

**FIRST
YEAR Do's
And Don'ts**

■ **Consider devices that limit TV access.** Some TVs and VCRs come with locking devices so they can't be used when you're not around. Also, some cable operators will instruct you on how to block out adult-oriented fare. Other recent inventions include TV Allowance, a system that, for about \$100, helps parents block out time slots and limit kids' viewing time.

putting

**TV
in its place**

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Thursday, March 3, 1994

Concerned parents tune into options for limiting kids' viewing time

TAKING CONTROL OF TV

Dad's device turns zombies human

One Saturday morning about three years ago, a dad in South Miami, Fla., disgusted by seeing his kids hypnotized by the TV, told them about six times to shut it off and go play.

The zombies didn't move. Big mistake. Their dad went on to create and market a device that limits the TV they can watch. And he sold several thousand to other parents.

"My kids were driving me nuts. They couldn't tie their shoelaces while the TV was on," said Randal Levenson, a photographer who wanted his kids to experience more of life.

Using parts he bought from a local Radio Shack store, he created TV Allowance, a gadget that controls the amount of time a child can watch the set or use it for games.

Each kid uses an access code to see his or her allotted hours. The children also can save up hours.

There are other mechanical devices for controlling TV time. Many sets sold today have a parental lock, which lets parents block out certain channels or shut the TV off at certain times.

Dimension Cable's newer converters also let parents block certain channels. And satellite subscribers can block not only selected channels, but also all movies that don't have a G rating.

But TV Allowance has been widely publicized, because it was such a novel idea when nationwide marketing began a year ago.

— TV ALLOWANCE, from page E1

If TV Allowance is presented properly to kids, it doesn't have to be their worst nightmare, Levenson says. Children should be involved in negotiating the allowance and any rewards.

In his family, the kids — two boys, now ages 14 and 12, and their sister, now 7 — each get to watch four hours a week. If a kid saves up 50 hours of TV allowance, he or she can cash it in for \$50. (That's about three months without TV.)

Levenson says it has been an "adventure" watching his kids wheel, deal and finally learn to cooperate.

At first, the boys would promise all kinds of things to little sister, who was then 4, for her hours. The trusting tot went along until she realized they were making hollow promises.

Then she began selling her time, like prisoners sell cigarettes. Levenson says other TV Allowance parents have

noticed the same thing.

"Whatever the attraction of TV seems to be, girls are able to manage it better than boys," he says. "Consequently, they have time to sell their brothers. . . . And they keep jacking the price."

Now, the three little Levensons often share their time so they each get to watch more.

The kids censor their own shows. When they get only four hours a week, they'll forgo MTV, professional mud wrestling and *Nightmare on Elm Street* so they can watch Bart Simpson, Levenson says.

Gradually, the kids get used to less TV. Levenson's oldest son hardly watches it at all anymore.

Many parents use the set as a baby

sitter. Levenson concedes that he has done this, sometimes even giving the kids extra hours so he and his wife can have more time to themselves.

"I'm ashamed to say that TV is a good baby sitter. I'm not anti-TV. I'm just anti-*too much* TV.

"Having a TV Allowance does put more demands on parents," he adds. "You've got to be ready to go out and play with the kids more. They want to shoot hoops or play chess or board games. Going to bookstores is our favorite thing now."

At 7 by 5 inches, TV Allowance is about the size of a desktop calculator. It's strong (to resist angry fists) and kid-proof. Levenson tested early models by paying kids \$20 to beat it: They found logical and mechanical glitches he hadn't thought of.

The machine costs \$99, plus \$6 for shipping and handling. To order one for your zombies, call 1-800-231-4410.



— See TV ALLOWANCE, page E2

FEEL LIKE YOU DON'T HAVE ANY FREE TIME?

Turn Off the TV

THE RAVIZZAS' TROUBLES with television had come to this: The entire family would sit down together to see "Baywatch," a beach ball soap opera also known as "Babewatch." That was fine with Monica, 13, and Nina, ten, who both loved the show. But for Claire Ravizza—who had grown up without TV in a household full of readers, talkers, game players—it was a kind of personal humiliation. Especially since by the time

By Benedict Carey

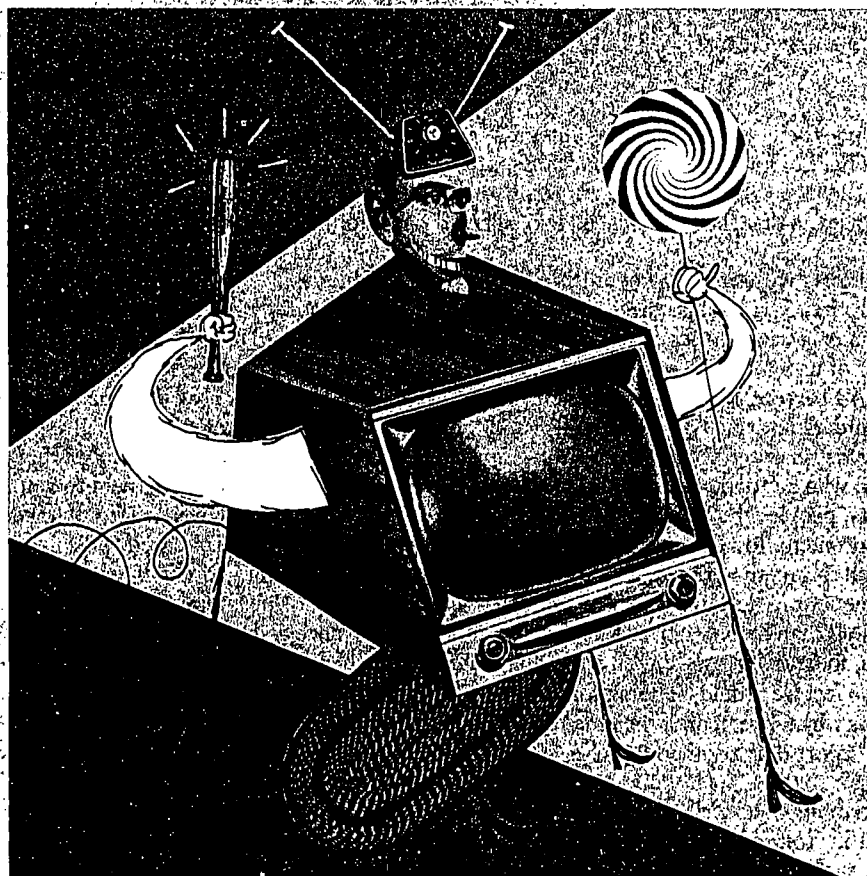


ILLUSTRATION by DAVID PLUNKERT

"Baywatch" came on Monica and Nina had already logged two hours watching reruns of "Full House" and "Saved by the Bell."

"They're pretty harmless shows, but I'd come home from work and the two of them would be planted on the couch watching," says Claire, a hospice care administrator. "It seemed the TV was on just because it was there. It was an automatic reflex." A foolish, mindless, even insulting reflex, in Claire's words, at best a limp substitute for playing, reading, or *doing* something, and at worst the beginnings of an insidious habit.

She plied the girls with books, engaged them in conversation, challenged them at games, encouraged them to practice athletics. Or simply said, "Go outside, it's beautiful," gesturing toward the big picture window through which all of Redondo Beach, California, seems visible, with its subtropical gardens and suburban lawns, the Pacific Ocean winking close on the horizon.

Only when this cajoling failed did Claire Ravizza lapse into the refrain, "Now, when I was growing up we didn't have a telev—"

"Uh-huh, and you walked barefoot through the snow to school every day," Monica might reply, her words bisected by a blunt "Good for you, Mom," from Nina. Their mother had to laugh

us from talking with friends and family, mocks our resolutions to learn Spanish, play the guitar, volunteer our time, and even cuts into our sleep.

Moreover, we don't particularly like many of the shows we watch. "'Full House' and 'Saved by the Bell' are always the same," says Nina. "There's some problem at the beginning, and by the end everyone's making up. It's really stupid."

Most children and adults rate watching TV as less enjoyable and satisfying than playing sports, going to cultural events, seeing movies, reading books and magazines. Both Monica and Nina play softball, for instance, and say they prefer practicing pitching and catching to TV. But once they—or any of us—slouch into the lee of the tube indiscriminately, Kubey has found, the urge to play, tinker, or do anything active dissipates.

"One day last February it came to a head," says Claire. "They all said they wanted cable, the two girls *and* my husband." Ken, a sports psychologist who works with the California Angels and the New York Jets, among other teams, insisted he had a professional obligation to monitor ESPN. "That's what pushed me over the edge," says his wife.

The looming sorcery of cable—of dozens more channels, Nick at Nite, Comedy Central, VH-1, MTV's "Beavis and Butt-Head," and God knows what else—indeed pushed Claire Ravizza over a threshold. Within a week she had rigged the family's TV with a slick little technobox that at first looked like an electronic key to a Magic Video Kingdom. Could it be . . . cable? Or a video game hookup? Or was it for pay-per-view movies, interactive TV, maybe even R-rated flicks?

Fat chance. Called TV Allowance, the box is not a magical key but a cold, steel lock. It's a combination lock, really. Each family member has a personal code that turns on the television for a set number of hours per week—a time allotment programmed by whoever holds the master key, in this case Claire Ravizza.

"We woke up the next morning and it was just there," says Nina of her mother's fait accompli. She and her sister found the weekday hours between 3 P.M. and 6 P.M. blacked out, the insipid Jesses, Kellys, and Zacks of "Full House" and "Saved by the Bell" suddenly banished, exiled. And the Ravizza girls' code numbers were good for only seven hours a week. One hour a night, Claire reckoned, would give her daughters time for the shows they really enjoyed, but force them to veto everything else. "We had no chance to talk her out of it," says Monica.

TV rationing gadgets now come in a variety of permutations. Where TV Allowance assigns family members a digital code to start the TV, another product, called TimeSlot, provides each person with a credit card that performs the same function. Other devices allow parents to lock out specific channels or times of day. For the past year or so, these companies and their customers have, in effect, been performing a social experiment. "It's a study no psychologist or TV researcher has done, as far as I know," says Donald F. Roberts, chairman of Stanford University's department of communication. "What happens when kids are forced to ration their television watching?"

TV Ration: At first, Monica (left) and Nina (right) were furious when their mother, Claire Ravizza, cut their TV time from 20 to seven hours a week. Now they watch even less.

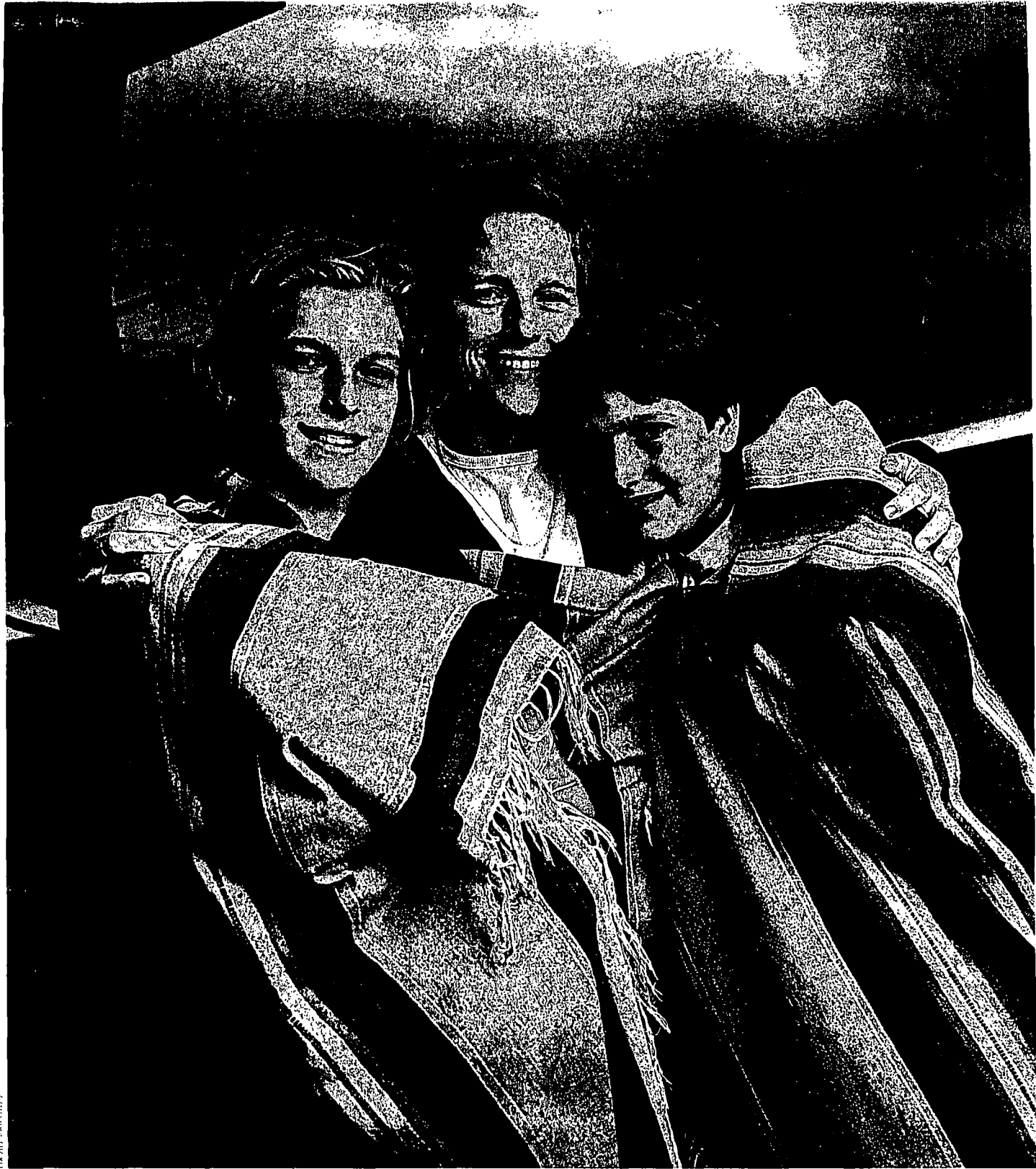
We don't particularly like many of the TV shows we watch, but once we slouch into the lee of the tube, the urge to play, tinker, or do anything dissipates.

at this singeing sarcasm—then worried again as the girls' eyes flickered back to the tube. Looking to her husband for support, Claire often saw Ken Ravizza caught up in an Angels baseball game or a late-night movie. As the television chirped and jabbered on, Claire seethed.

In fact, the Ravizza girls were merely keeping up with the national average for ten- to 13-year-olds: three to four hours of TV a day, or about 20 hours a week. American adults aren't much more disciplined. Most of us watch between 15 and 18 hours a week, spending about 40 percent of our leisure time in front of the television. It's an understandable habit—we're stressed, and watching television *seems* relaxing. According to Rutgers psychologist Robert Kubey, who has done extensive studies of Americans' TV-viewing habits, people who've had a bad day at school or work are especially prone to flop down in front of the TV.

The only problem with this method of stress-reduction: Kubey's studies also show that people actually feel less relaxed and satisfied after watching TV than before. Not to mention the guilt. When asked in surveys, most of us say we wish we didn't watch so much TV—because we feel we should be doing something more productive. Maybe that's why 64 percent of the time people spend watching TV they also report doing something else, such as eating, talking, or cleaning.

One of the reasons so many of us feel crunched for time is that we spend so much of it in front of the tube, says John P. Robinson, director of Americans' Use of Time Project at the University of Maryland. Television viewing crowds our waking lives. It keeps



They try to cheat, that's what. "We tried to unplug it, we tried guessing our mom's code, we tried dates, birthdays, everything," says Nina. Frustrated, they ducked across the street to their friend Vonique's house to watch. But that strategy left them at the mercy of Vonique's taste and her infant sister's screaming.

Then the Ravizza girls became a little testy—toward each other, their parents, and particularly toward commercial interruptions. "They wanted to know if I could subtract commercial time," says Claire. "I said, 'Sorry.'" In an act of revolt, Monica and Nina became the prodigal daughters—Nina spending her entire allowance

on Saturday cartoons such as "Marsupilami" and "Garfield and Friends," Monica gorging on a California Angels homestand.

In the formerly bland confines of the TV room, accusations flew. Nina said Monica was stealing her time. Monica said no way: Nina was poaching *her* time.

Finally, grudgingly, they began to alter the architecture of their daily routines. The after-school hours at first seemed empty, cavernous. But eventually Nina turned to her Legos and began constructing labyrinthine structures. She'd go in-line skating or try her hand at Sincity, a computer game that requires players

TV: WHEN YOU'RE NOT REMOTELY IN CONTROL

WE SAY WE DON'T even like to watch TV. So why do it? "Because it's so easy," says Donald F. Roberts, chairman of Stanford University's department of communication. "It's something we do when we can't think of anything else." Here are a few suggestions for breaking the spell.

Don't watch TV, watch TV shows. Before you turn on the set, pick up the TV listings to see if there's anything you really want to watch. Only half of Americans report using a television guide to help them decide what to tune in. Once the TV is on, Roberts says, it's hard to turn off.

The TV listings will also allow you to schedule the family's favorite programs each week—and watch only those. "Tell yourself you're not going to turn the TV on until the program actually starts," says psychologist Robert Kubey, "and turn it off when the program is over."

Make a list of alternatives to television. "Include activities that are either enjoyable or useful, such as doing a puzzle, writing a letter, or going for a walk," says Kubey. "Then tape this list to the refrigerator or the TV as a reminder." If you've got the space, treat one room in the house as the hobby room—a place where it's okay to leave the sewing out or a jigsaw puzzle half-finished. This helps make these activities readily accessible. More strenuous diversions, such as jogging or tennis, require more energy to jump-start. Leaving your gym bag packed by the door helps; scheduling regular exercise with a friend is even better.

Tape shows on VCR and skip through the ads. This can reduce the length of shows by almost half. "I tape 'Saturday Night Live,' watch only the funny stuff, and skip everything else," Kubey says.

Buy an electronic TV-rationing machine. Three products now dominate the market:

TimeSlot. With this product, families get a TV "credit card," which, when passed through an ATM card-like reader, gives you a set amount of TV time each week—a time programmed by the holder of the master credit card. Available through North Carolina Public Television, 800/693-3939. Cost is \$129.95.

TV Allowance. Similar to TimeSlot, except that each family member gets a numerical code to punch in on a digital display to activate the TV. Again, the holder of the master code programs the number of hours per week. Available at some electronics stores or call 800/231-4410. Cost is \$99.

TV LockOut. Installed between the TV and antenna, this lock-box blocks all reception with the turn of a key. Available at some electronics stores or call 800/223-6009. Cost is \$24.99. —B.C.

to develop strategies for running a large metropolitan area. Monica practiced her softball pitching, went on bike rides, played basketball, and started reading more. Once sporadic, these activities have now become habitual.

"People don't seem to have an awareness that watching TV is a choice about how to spend free time that requires you to forgo more enjoyable pastimes," says Robinson. Devices like TV Allowance force people to make more conscious choices.

"Look," says Nina, pointing to a book called *Clan of the Cave Bear*, lying on a table in front of Monica. "She's almost finished that thing. Hey, Mo, how long you been reading that?"

"Just this weekend," says Monica.

Her sister stares for a moment, caught between disbelief and awe.

"I gave her that book after I read it," says Claire, "and I'd say it's pretty advanced for a seventh grader. If she has questions about something, she asks me. We're talking about books now—that's something we never did much before."

"You know," Monica says, "sometimes you even have time to do your schoolwork before dinner. Really. I mean, if you're bored with reading and the computer, or don't want to go outside—sometimes you just say, 'Why not, might as well get it over with.'"

When they have friends over, both girls tend to hoard their allowance. "I don't want to use up my time. We usually end up playing board games or computer games or something," says Nina.

After dinner, Monica and Nina still watch plenty of TV, but now it's a privilege that calls for some bartering and diplomacy. Sometimes the two behave like allies: Sundays they always watch "Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman," Mondays it's still "Baywatch," and Fridays they like to catch "Family Matters." "If one of us veges out on Saturday and has no time left," says Monica, "we'll share time to watch those shows."

Ken and Claire Ravizza don't limit their own TV time; they can watch whatever and whenever they want. Still, if the kids are being choosy, the parents feel pressure to follow suit. "I'll tell you what," says Ken, "I won't turn on the TV just because I have nothing to do. They can't do that anymore, so why should I?" He finds he suddenly has time to read or exercise.

"I'll only put a show on if there's something of value in it," says Claire. "Like there was one we saw recently, about a boy who had muscular dystrophy. I thought that was worthwhile."

"Sick and dying shows, that's what she likes," says Nina. "Those boring programs where somebody is terminally ill."

Monica smirks. "Educational shows, you mean."

For adults, educational shows are like fruits and vegetables: They make you feel less guilty about eating junk food. In the Ravizzas' case, this translates into video rentals on Friday or Saturday nights, when the whole family sits down with popcorn and sodas and no one has to pay with their TV Allowance time.

Families who watch favorite shows or videos together consider the experience a positive one that, if anything, makes them closer. "There's as much evidence that TV brings families together as that it pulls them apart," says Kubey.

The Ravizzas haven't completely purged their TV longings. They still like watching their favorite shows, but at week's end they often find they haven't even used up their entire allowance. Enforced TV rationing has created some nice open spaces in the Ravizzas' day, quiet and uncertain moments that get filled with odd pieces of conversation, reading, complaining, tinkering. "Or just nothing," says Nina. "Sometimes you don't know what to do. You just fiddle around doing nothing."

Benedict Carey is a staff writer.



The Buist Academy PTA Newsletter

October 1994

Device lets child 'bank' TV time week to week...

Randall Levenson has sold thousands of his invention, called the "TV Allowance," in almost 2½ years. He and his family have appeared on "The Oprah Winfrey Show," "CBS This Morning," NBC's "Today Show" and ABC's "Home Show."

Using the device, which sits atop the TV, parents can set the number of hours a child can watch TV. The child then must punch in his own four-digit code or turn the TV on.

The device keeps track of how much time the child has watched, and lets the child "bank" time week to week. Parents have to use a code to turn the TV on, too, but they have unlimited access.

Levenson says the device, which looks like an oversized calculator, was field-tested by dozens of kids before it was introduced on the market. It's made tough, he says, and a lock and key keep kids from defeating the system by unplugging it.

The device costs \$99 and works on only one television. You can buy additional units for \$79 each. Orders can be placed by calling 1-800-231-4410.

*Reprinted from The Post and Courier
Article by Mark Gauert
of the Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel*

FAY 305-666-7180

PARENT TO PARENT

I'd like to share with you our family's experience with the TV Allowance™ we installed a year ago.

What It Is

Very interesting

The TV Allowance™ is a small black box with a number pad and display into which our television is plugged. In order to watch TV, each child must first punch in their (secret) access code. The TV Allowance™ then subtracts the viewing time from that child's account. If all the time in the account is used up, the television shuts off and will not turn on for that child's code until the following week when the account automatically rolls over and gives him or her the next allowance.

How It Works

Like many families, we had set a limit for TV watching and encouraged our 3 children to plan ahead of time what they were going to watch. The problem was in trying to keep track of three schedules, exceptions and conflicts, my husband and I were beginning to feel like the Television Police.

Now each child gets a total of 4 hours of TV allowance a week. Our rule is that any one may watch once the TV is turned on. Since we have 3 children, each child could theoretically watch up to 12 hours a week. Any time not used is rolled over into the next week on that child's account.

What Our Family Found

The most important benefit to us has been that we as parents are no longer in the middle. The TV Allowance™ keeps perfect records, and is unimpressed with whining, sulking or pleading. Our children have learned to distinguish between what they want to watch and what they need to watch and to budget their time. Their negotiation skills have improved as they make deals with each other about time sharing; and conflict (at least over the TV) is at an all time low.

The TV Allowance™ does not mean we abdicate all parental responsibility around television watching. Although certain time periods can be blacked out, (such as family designated home work hour or late at night), we still monitor what our children watch and make time to discuss content with them. And the whole family enjoys a weekend movie on "parents time."

If you want to learn more about the TV Allowance™, give them a call at (800) 231-4410.

called for information \$100

Sincerely,
Gargene Graver

PARENTS: If you have something to share with other families, please, submit it to the office.
Thank you.

OCTOBER 1994

PARENTING

Time

News & Views

H gh-Tech Tune-Out

TV Allowance

What It Is: An electronic hourglass.

How It works: To turn on the TV, a child must punch in a personal code. The device then counts down the child's allotted weekly viewing time (as programmed by you, the

parent-ogre). When the meter hits zero, it's no more tube until next week. The machine can also black out specific time periods.

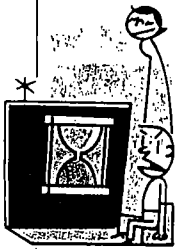
Why parents will like it: It teaches kids to watch TV selectively.

How kids can defeat it: Bribe younger sibs for their codes.

Manufacturer: TV Allowance

Cost: \$99

Where you can get it: Electronics stores, or call 800/231-4410.



Callen, four,
thinking
it over.

The New York Times

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

Sunday, March 7, 1993

Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

TV Chastity Belt

Why do our kids do so badly in school? Lots of people will tell you it's because they spend too much time in front of a TV set. And it's true that the numbers are staggering. In 1990, one in four 9-year-olds spent six or more hours, seven days a week, watching TV. That's more than most adults spend at work and certainly more than these kids spent in school. It's also true that kids who watch lots of TV have poor test scores. What should we do?

Some people talk about parents' cracking down, but a Miami entrepreneur has invented a far more ingenious solution. It's a gadget that rations children's television time and shuts off the set when a kid has used up his allotment.

Here's how it works. The parent enters Johnny's weekly ration of TV time into a black box that controls the TV power supply. To turn on the TV, the kid needs to punch in his four-digit ID number, and as he listens to MTV or plays a game of Nintendo, a clock in the black box debits his account. When he's used up his time, the set dies, and it's no more TV until next week. The gadget can also black out whole time periods—for instance, between midnight and 6 a.m. so a kid can't sneak out of bed to watch an X-rated film.

This TV chastity belt has gotten enthusiastic notices in the *Washington Post*, the *Boston Globe* and even *TV Guide*. Testimonials talk about how it has restored tranquility to family life because parents don't have to say *no* all the time and how it teaches kids to budget their time and make judgments about what they really want. Above all, of course, it ensures that a youngster's weekly ration of television does not depend on his own discipline or self-control.

Gadgets like this are familiar in the adult world, too. Look at the self-locking refrigerator device for people who are desperate to lose weight or the cigarette case that can be programmed to release only a certain number of cigarettes a day. You can also see it at the highest levels of the U.S. government in the Gramm-Rudman bill and the proposed balanced budget amendment. Both are based on the idea that people in Congress can't keep themselves from overspending, and what they need is a gadget that makes it impossible for them to lose control.

But before we put this difficulty in saying *no* down to human nature—which is the same thing as saying that youngsters can't do anything about it—there's another angle. Kids in Japan, Germany, France, Sweden and Holland also have TV sets, but as far as I know, there's been no wave of companies forming in these countries to market TV chastity belts. Their kids watch far less television, on average, than American youngsters. They also achieve at much higher levels. How come?

Most adults do what they must in order to get what they want, and kids are no different. Youngsters in these other countries know that if they want to get into university, it's not enough to squeak through high school. They must study hard and pass a demanding examination. As for kids who are going right from school to work, they know that the courses they have taken, the grades they have gotten and their success on examinations will determine the kind of job they get.

American kids see no good reason to turn off the TV and do their schoolwork. A high school graduate who wants to go to college, and can swing it financially, will be able to find some school to accept him, no matter how little he knows and how poor his grades. It's about the same for youngsters who are going right to work. Top companies don't hire new graduates—they prefer workers in their twenties who already have experience. And the companies that do hire new graduates seldom ask for a transcript or care what kind of record a kid has.

Too much television may lead to poor school performance, but we are not going to take care of the problem by locking up the TV sets. Doing so might induce a handful of kids to start paying attention to their schoolwork, but the rest will find other ways of occupying their time. We must connect student achievement with what happens after graduation—with getting into college or getting a good job—and we must make the stakes visible to our students. Until we do that, we will not get the kind of improvement in student performance that we want and need—no matter how ingenious and successful we are at turning off the tube.



Testimonials talk about how it has restored tranquility to family life because parents don't have to say *no* all the time and how it teaches kids to budget their time.

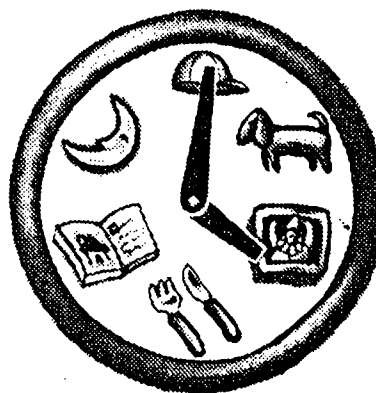
Teaching Children to Say No to TV

To the Editor:

I was pleased to read "TV Chastity Belt" by Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers (advertisement, The Week in Review, March 7), which discusses my TV Allowance invention — "a gadget that rations children's television time and shuts off the set when a kid has used up his allotment." However, some comment and correction are needed.

The technological advantage that TV Allowance gives parents in controlling how much television their children watch is merely a necessity, in view of the technological advances in broadcasting, Nintendo, video and other television-related entertainments. With the wide range of programs, videos and video games available, a child has little chance of resisting, particularly a child who is just learning to read.

The TV Allowance was demonstrated at the consumer electronics show in Las Vegas last January. Contrary to Mr. Shanker's view about Japanese and Europeans having more discipline than Americans and hence being less interested in TV Allowance, we received tremendous response from foreign companies.



Kouichi Sakumoto

The reason is that Nintendo is now universal and that television viewing via satellite, cable and broadcasting is proliferating everywhere.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize to Mr. Shanker and all others in education that the TV Allowance is an educational device. It allows children to budget their time, to learn to make choices and to control their viewing.

RANDAL LEVENSON
South Miami, Fla., March 18, 1993

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Distracted Students Fail

The miserable results of the latest Massachusetts Educational Assessment Tests are jarring and depressing. But they were hardly unexpected.

Earlier this year, 155,000 youngsters in grades 4, 8, and 12 took standardized reading, math, science and social studies tests. Seventy-five percent of them, to put it bluntly, flunked. They cannot reason or communicate clearly, and cannot apply their knowledge to the solving of age-appropriate problems.

As part of their test package, students were asked some non-academic questions about TV, books, and homework.

Among fourth-graders, 41 percent watch two to three hours of television a day. Another 30 percent watch more than four hours.

Among 12th-graders, 34 percent had read no books on their own in the month before the tests and they spent less than an hour a day on homework.

Kids don't read, don't do homework, don't have an attention span more encompassing than the flip of a TV switch.

Many educators will insist that schools are in need of more money, more innovative approaches, and more gimmicks to dazzle students. But what most schools and students really need is discipline — and discipline to

require students in a class to learn, to require them to complete homework, to require them to return the next day and learn some more.

Kids can learn from the "instructional methods of the past." But too few are paying attention, because we have filled their lives with distractions.

Boston Herald • November 25, 1992

TV and Learned Violence

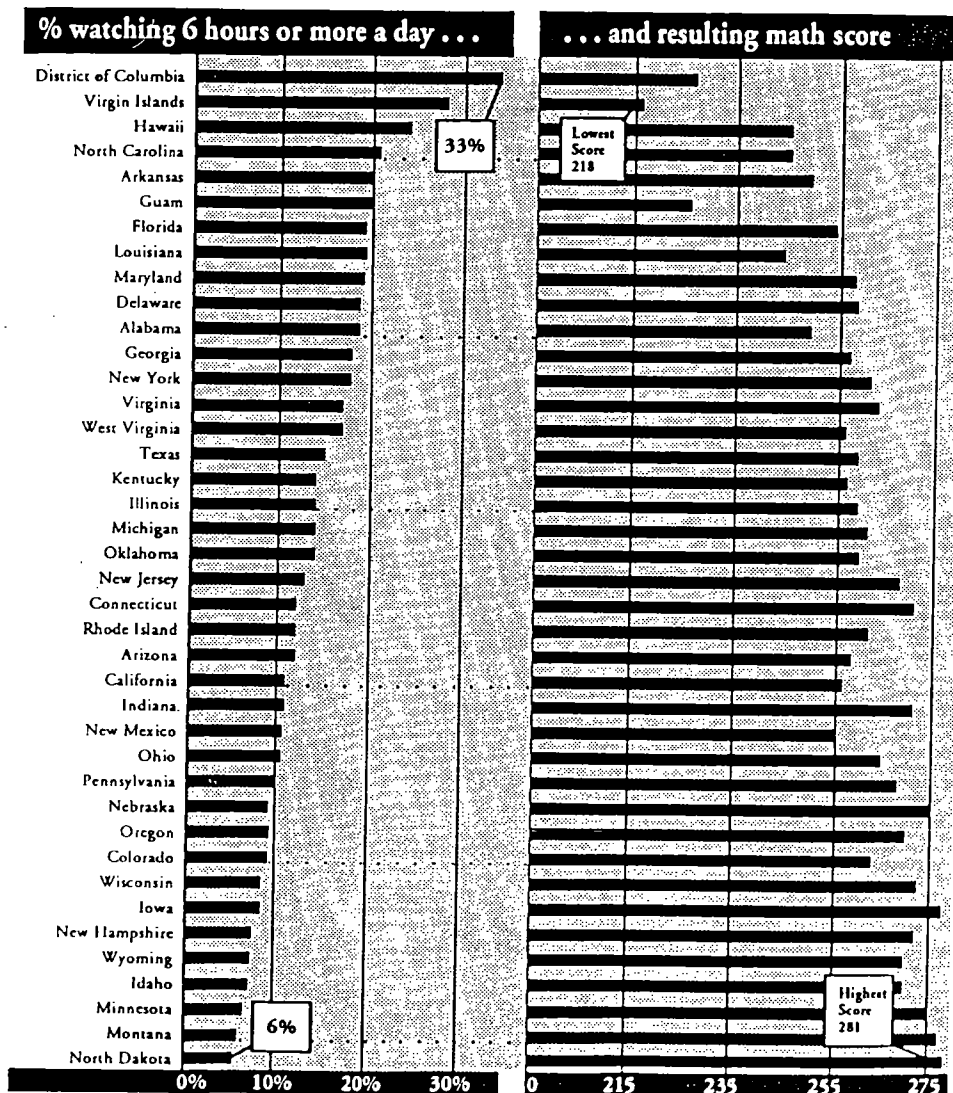
There is no shortage of major studies on the effects of televised violence. Among them: The National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (1968); the Surgeon General's Report (1972); the National Institute of Mental Health's Report (1982); and the U.S. Attorney General's Task Force on Family Violence (1984). The NIMH states the consensus: "Violence on television does lead to aggressive behavior by children and teenagers who watch the programs . . .

"Television violence affects youngsters of all ages, of both genders, and at all socioeconomic levels, and at all levels of intelligence."

Reader's Digest, August 22, 1992

The TV-School Connection...

Chart Source: Educational Testing Service
By Gary Visgailis, USA TODAY



How The Family Factors Into Classroom Learning

Books and magazines are disappearing from homes. Students are missing too much school, and they're watching inordinate amounts of TV.

Educators have long complained that the social conditions that exist at home — beyond their control — have greatly contributed to the slide in the nation's collective academic performance.

But if they needed better ammunition to make that connection, they will find it in *America's Smallest School: The Family*, a new report by the Education Testing Service, the same people who conduct the Scholastic Aptitude Test and the National Tests of Educational Progress.

Using data from those previous tests and other surveys, the report shows a correlation between factors at home, and a state's average test scores that, in total, surprised even researchers who had seen these numbers individually before. To wit:

- Eighth graders in North Dakota lead the nation in the percentage who have three or more types of reading materials (books, magazines, newspapers or encyclopedias) in their home. And they also scored highest in the country on a national math test that involved 37 states, two territories, and Washington D.C. that volunteered to take the test.

- Students in Washington D.C. led the nation in eighth graders (33%) who watch six hours or more of TV per day, and also had the second worst math score.

"I was surprised the correlation is so high between factors at home state-by-state and the performance of their students," says Paul Barton, co-author of the ETS report.

The statistics will tell you that about half the variation in state scores can be explained simply by the variation in how much a state's students read at home, he says.

But the factors are also interrelated. States with high percentages of kids who watch lots of TV, for instance, are probably going to have low percentages of kids doing much reading at home,

Barton says.

On balance, the message from the report is clear: *Education is affected by the smallest of its school systems — the family.*

Another tidbit from the report worth noting:

- U.S. kids have relatively lots of materials to read, but don't use them. Among 15 countries surveyed in one international assessment of education, the U.S. students reported having more reading materials at home than students in nine of those countries. Yet, the U.S. ranked 12th in percentage of kids who read for fun every day.

By Dennis Kelly, USA TODAY

HELPFUL HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS

The TV ALLOWANCESM features are the result of much parental feedback. Feel free to call us anytime with suggestions.

Congratulations! You have just purchased the TV ALLOWANCESM! This television time manager will help you to teach your children the value of their time while reducing the amount of hours they spend watching television and playing video games. The TV ALLOWANCESM may help your children learn valuable lifelong skills such as time management, negotiation and compromise and how to save against a rainy day. In setting up the TV ALLOWANCESM you may want to read the following suggestions and hints which can help in making the TV ALLOWANCESM become an effective teaching tool in your home.

PRE-INSTALLATION

You should begin by having a family meeting to discuss the guidelines for the use of the TV ALLOWANCESM and the reasons why you think it is a good idea. You should make it clear to your children that you purchased the TV ALLOWANCESM not as a punishment, but rather because you care about them and their future.

The TV ALLOWANCESM is not meant to cut out the child's television viewing altogether but it is intended to help them make better use of their time. Let the children know you will be receptive to alternate activities such as board games, sports activities, by providing books to read and other creative endeavors.

It will probably take about two weeks for your children to adjust to the TV ALLOWANCESM although you will find that they understand it immediately and that the stress in the house about TV and video games will disappear right away. The children will understand they are now responsible for "how" and "when" they use their time and will learn through trial and error to manage that time to their benefit. After a few weeks of using the TV ALLOWANCESM you may want to ask your children what they think about the TV ALLOWANCESM. Discuss their schoolwork, have grades improved, have other activities increased?

Ask the children to make up their own codes. This is another good way of involving your children in planning how the TV ALLOWANCESM will be used. Remember each code is specific to each child and should a child forget his/her code you can simply access the parent code to see that

particular child's code number. You are also able to change each child's code (as well as the parent code) whenever you wish to.

If you have more than four children and one TV and therefore one TV ALLOWANCESM, you may want to double up the youngest children on one code. You would then have to double the weekly time for their account and they would split the time.

So that the TV ALLOWANCESM does not become your kids worst nightmare, introduce them to it by sitting down with them and asking them what they need to watch in a week, not what they want to watch in a week: let them know that if they manage their weekly allotment of time they can view what you both have agreed is important to them. What a child needs to watch is usually far less than what he/she wants to watch. You may want to sit down and pull out the TV guide section of the paper and go over this with your child to see what and when the shows are they would like to view. This will help you when you get to the step where you may want to block out the time the child should be doing his/her homework.

SAVE FEATURE

We also strongly suggest you establish a meaningful reward for your children if they are able to save up their weekly hours to a certain goal. Younger children should be rewarded more immediately to understand the benefit of saved time.

In order for the TV ALLOWANCESM to be able to save unused hours from one week to the next, simply enter the parent code and when the green light is lit, press LOOK, then press ALLOW, and then the numeral 1 and the ENTER key. This will activate the SAVE feature for each child. Each family is different and therefore, the goal and reward system for your family will be unique. Keep in mind that the goal of saved, unused hours should be reflective of how many hours you give your child a week. In other words it should neither be too hard for the child to attain the goal, nor should it be too easy. (Ex: If you give a child four hours a week of viewing time and he/she uses only two per week and saves the other two, and the goal to save for is fifty hours, it will take the child six and a half months to accumulate enough time to gain the reward).

The SAVE feature teaches good saving skills from a very early age, a practice which will take on even greater importance later in life. You may wish to activate this feature in the beginning or you may want to wait until the children have put the TV ALLOWANCESM to use for a few

weeks giving them the time to adjust and find other activities to fill their time.

People ask "What if my kids share their time and therefore watch more time than they should?"

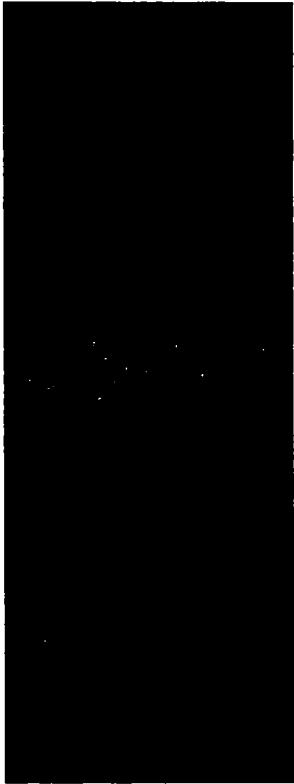
The answer here is that the rule in the house should be that if the TV is on, anyone is free to watch it, and thus you should give your children collectively a small enough amount of time that they are encouraged to cooperate and share their time, which is especially useful to them if they are saving against a reward. Remember when initially programming the TV ALLOWANCE™ it is easier to increase weekly hours than it is to decrease.



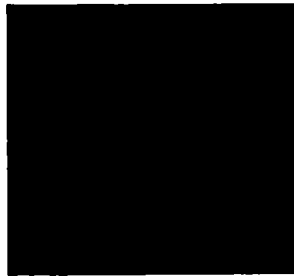
BLOCKOUT FEATURE

The TV ALLOWANCE™ allows you to block out three different time periods. The time periods are any you wish to choose. The homework hours, usually 3-6, are the hours most often blocked out. You may also want to block out before school hours and also late night/early morning for those teenagers who come home and watch TV into the early morning hours after being out with their friends.

Remember when setting up and installing the TV ALLOWANCE™ you should use three AAA batteries placed in the battery holder in the underside of the unit. The battery backup will make it unnecessary to reprogram the TV ALLOWANCE™ when there is a power failure or the TV ALLOWANCE™ itself becomes unplugged from the outlet. This procedure will also ensure that the children cannot reprogram the unit on their own.



TV ALLOWANCE™



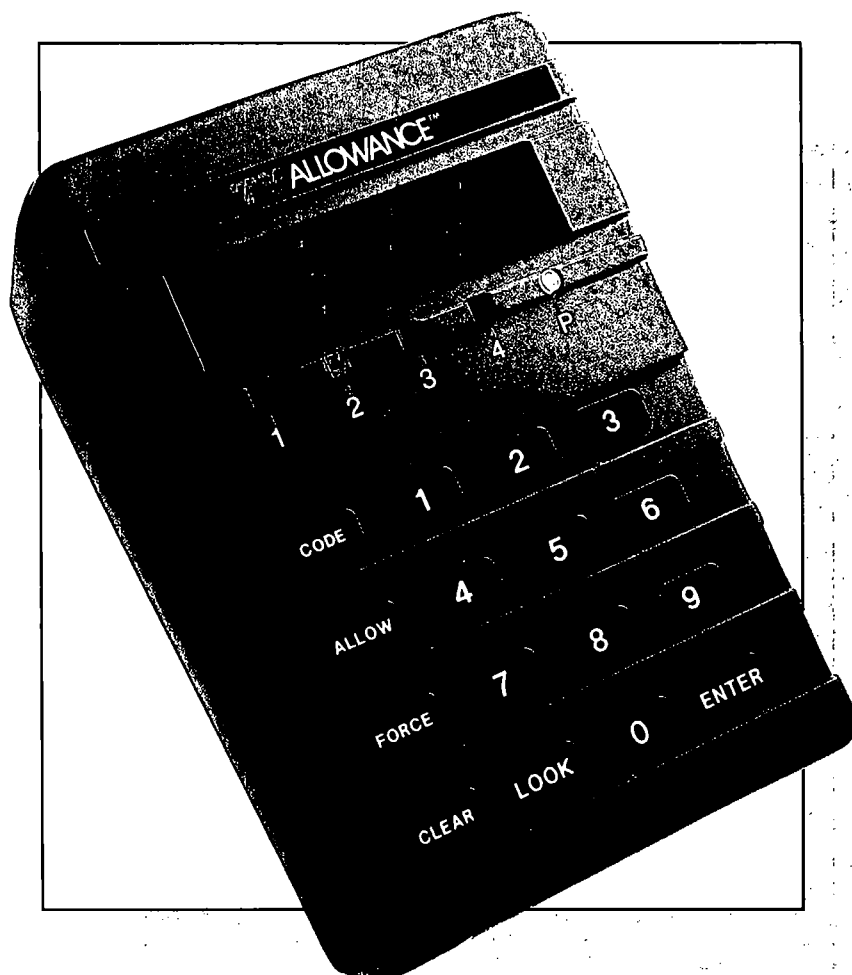
PARENTAL GUIDE

TVALLOWANCETM

TELEVISION TIME MANAGER

No more
arguments
about T.V. and
video games

It really works!
Kids can't cheat!
We Guarantee it.



AS SEEN ON:

- Oprah
- NBC Today
- Donahue
- CNN
- CBS This Morning
- ABC Home Show

TAKE BACK THE TUBE!

Introducing the **TVALLOWANCETM** — the Television Time Manager, a quality device designed to limit the amount of time children watch television/video games. Now parents may use the **TVALLOWANCETM** to set weekly allowable time for T.V. or video games for each child, therefore reducing the negative influence of too much T.V. in the home.

GIVE YOUR KIDS AN EDGE

The use of the **TVALLOWANCETM** can lead to better reading skills, better grades and richer activities for children. The **TVALLOWANCETM** encourages children to evaluate television programs and make wise viewing choices. Children learn valuable time management skills.

MADE IN THE USA

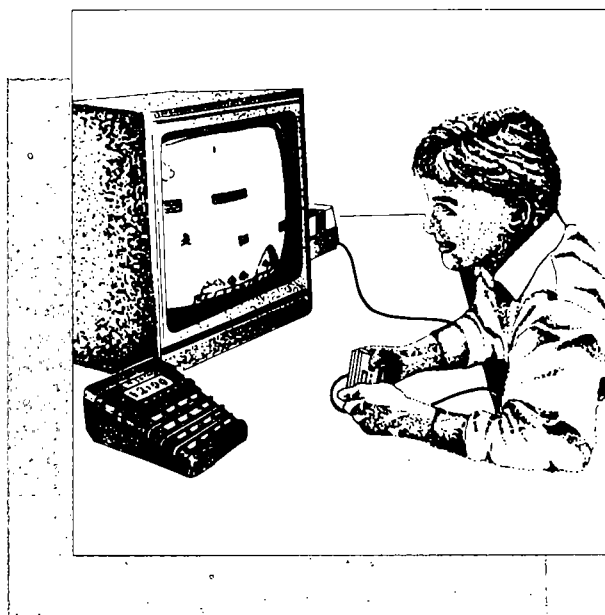
HOW IT WORKS

Simply plug the T.V.'s power cord into the locking compartment of the **TVALLOWANCE™**. Insert three AAA batteries, lock the compartment door and plug the **TVALLOWANCE™** power cord into any wall outlet. It's as easy as that! The parent and child then decide on the amount of time to be allowed for viewing each week. Using a master code, the parent programs the **TVALLOWANCE™**. Each child (up to four) receives a four digit code which is used to access the T.V. As each child uses their own code to view a program, their particular account is debited for each minute of viewed time. If all the time in the account is used up, the television shuts off and will not turn on for that child's code until the following week when the account automatically rolls over and gives your child the next allowance. *IT REALLY WORKS!*

OTHER FEATURES

- A LOOK button that allows the child or parent to check the time remaining in his or her account.
- A SAVE function so the child can accumulate his or her allowance from week to week, building up credit towards a reward.
- A MASTER code, used not only for programming the **TVALLOWANCE™** but also for parent, babysitter and special family viewing.
- A BLOCK ability that can be used to block out certain time periods (i.e., homework hours or late night offensive programming).

The **TVALLOWANCE™** works with video games, VCR and television.



- Easy to use
- Does not interfere with VCR, cable or remotes.
- High quality electronic components
- High impact case and sturdy construction to stand up to heavy family use
- LED readout for clear viewing under low light conditions
- High quality 4 color packaging
- UPC coded
- FCC approved
- UL listed
- Battery back-up
- 3AAA batteries required

Model #100

UPC #7 49447 10000 2

	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Master Carton</u>
Quantity	1 piece	12 pieces
Weight	2 lbs.	28 lbs.
Dimensions	8 x 6 x 4	19 x 17 x 8

TVALLOWANCE

MADE IN THE U.S.A.

TV ALLOWANCE

A DIVISION OF MINDMASTER, INC.
5605 S.W. 74th Street
Suite 21
South Miami, FL 33143

Randal Levenson
President

305-669-4365
800-231-4410
305-666-2180 FAX

Clinton Library Transfer Form

Case #, if applicable	2013-0436-S	Accession #		
Collection/Record Group	Clinton Presidential Records	Series/Staff Name	Ann O'Leary	
Subgroup/Office of Origin	Domestic Policy Council	Subseries		
Folder Title	TVA [Television Allowance] White House [3	OA Number	19586	Box Number
Description of Item(s)	1 Photo Slide of a TV Allowance Television Time Manager, Stored in AV regular storage on 12-5-8-4			

Donor Information				
Last Name:		First Name:		Middle Name:
Affiliation:		Phone (Wk):		Phone (Hm):
Street:		City:		State (or Country):
				Zip:

Transferred to:	Audio/Visual Department
Other (Specify):	

Transferred by:	Lisa Sutton
Transfer Point	During Processing

Date of Tranfer	3/20/2013
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TV ALLOWANCE[®]

**PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION**



MINDMASTER, INC.
5605 S.W. 74th Street
Suite 21
South Miami, FL 33143

305-669-4365
800-231-4410
305-666-2180 FAX

MADE IN THE USA

TOLEDO, OHIO

THE MEDICAL JOURNAL

BY MICHAEL WOODS



Kids and TV: a strong bond

American children watch television an average of 3 hours a day. Some kids spend more time watching TV than going to school or doing anything else except sleeping.

By the end of sixth grade, the average child has seen 8,000 murders and 100,000 other violent acts on TV. Teenagers see 14,000 sexual references each year.

Does watching violence and other undesirable behavior on television contribute to such behavior in real life?

Scientists are accumulating more and more evidence that televised violence is among the causes of the aggressive behavior, violence, and crime so rampant in society today.

Much of the evidence appears sporadically, and easily escapes public attention.

Early in 1992, for instance, Dr. Leonard Eron, head of the American Psychological Association commission on violence and youth, reported results from his landmark 22-year study. It found that a steady diet of TV violence plays a definite role in the development of violent and aggressive behavior.

Adding to the concern is a major new report from APA, which has 110,000 members and is the world's largest organization of psychologists.

A nine-member APA panel of experts spent 5 years reviewing research on the positive and negative effects of television. Its report confirmed a link between televised violence and the development of violent behavior in children.

But it went further, implicating television in the formation of gender and racial stereotypes, diminished academic performance, and other problems.

Researchers found, for instance, that commercial television is rife with negative images and stereotypes of women and minority groups, which the study said create or maintain prejudice and racism.

Television teaches children that the ideal woman is young, beautiful, dependent, helpless, passive, valued for her appearance rather than her capabilities. It tells them, time and again, directly and by innuendo, that ethnic minorities often are criminals, or dangerous characters involved in violence.

TV depicts violence as the American way of resolving disputes: Don't talk over a disagreement and compromise — go ahead and punch someone in the face, bash their head with an iron bar, knife them or shoot them.

Prime-time television depicts five to six incidents of violence per hour, according to the study. The number rises to 20-25 per hour for children's Saturday morning programs.

Television suggests that sexual activity between unmarried couples with little emotional attachment or commitment to each other is acceptable.

The new report adds to a long and growing body of concern about TV's effects on kids.

For years, the American Academy of Pediatrics has cautioned parents about television's potential for promoting violent and aggressive behavior, contributing to early sexual activity and drug and alcohol abuse, poor school performance, and obesity.

Children are exposed to one hour of commercials for every five hours of programming, with the typical child watching 20,000 commercials per year. Many are food commercials encouraging consumption of foods high in fat or sugar.

Yet the study also cites the great paradox about television. TV is not in itself bad. It can have good effects, educating, informing, enlightening. The effects, obviously, depend on what children watch.

The report notes that parents can influence children's viewing habits, encouraging kids to watch educational shows, nature documentaries, and other responsible programming.

AAP says children should be allowed to watch only one to two hours of TV per day. Parents should help decide what the children watch, and make sure the kids are educated viewers.

Many young kids, for instance, don't know the difference between programs and commercials. Parents should watch TV with the kids, noting departures from reality and the family's own values.

Michael Woods is *The Blade's* science editor.

Media

Just Say 'No!' to TV Addiction, Activists Urge

■ Canadian foundation buys air time to tell people to unplug their sets and stop conspicuous consumption.

By MARY WILLIAMS WALSH
TIMES STAFF WRITER

VANCOUVER, Canada—Political songster Gil Scott-Heron got it right in 1974: The revolution will not be televised. Not, at least, on the ABC and NBC affiliates in Los Angeles. Nor will it appear on any of the network affiliates in Boston, or, most likely, in any other major American media market.

But the revolution has made its television debut in such Canadian crossroads as Thunder Bay, Ontario, 100 Mile House, British Columbia and Red Deer, Alberta.

We're talking about Kalle Lasn's media revolution, an environmentally oriented uprising against rampant consumerism and the print and television commercials that abet it up and down North America.

Lasn, director of the Vancouver-based Media Foundation—also known as Adbusters—is trying not to rein in broadcasters and advertisers but to produce professional advertisements of his own, then raise money for TV time or magazine space to get them before the public.

The twist is that Adbusters urges against conspicuous consumption—and urges viewers to unplug the TV set as well.

So far, the approach is working better in Canada than in the United States. But it has already won respect on both sides of the border from a variety of public interest groups concerned about the content of TV broadcasts.

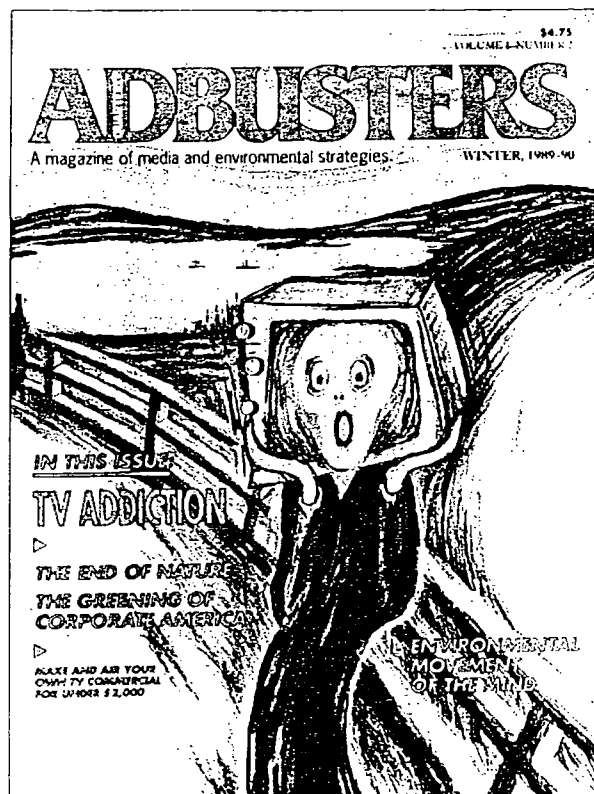
"I think their work is urgent," says Olof Sundin, who runs an addictions program at Bellevue Community College near Seattle. Sundin thinks many North Americans are addicted to TV, and he sees parallels between chemical addiction and compulsive shopping. He has mounted a campaign to get one of the Adbusters spots on Seattle television.

Which is just what Lasn had hoped people would do when he launched the Media Foundation three years ago. He envisions a time when environmental, political and religious groups will walk into their local TV stations, pull out their checkbooks and buy time to get onto the air ideas about something besides the purported joys of buying and owning.

"The commercial media can be seen, in a way, as our biggest environmental problem," he suggests. "Every 12 minutes, it's saying, 'Buy! Buy! Buy!'" Lasn goes so far as to call TV addiction the continent's No. 1 mental health problem.

Indeed, statistics now show that the average American is bombarded with 3,000 ads a day, when everything from TV commercials to billboards is counted. By age 20, the typical American has seen 300,000 ads on television alone, at a clip of 800 per week. And thanks to the global proliferation of cable offerings and satellite dishes, American ad-meisters are now free to taunt the world's hundreds of millions of poor with impossible, perhaps dangerous longings.

But in the very face of our commercial logorrhea, Lasn sees reason for hope. The consumer culture, he reasons, has become so pervasive, so grating and so out of touch with common-sense economic and envi-



Media Foundation's magazine blames mind-bending TV for rampant consumerism. "Every 12 minutes, it's saying, 'Buy! Buy! Buy!'" complains director Kalle Lasn.

ronmental realities that growing numbers of North Americans are getting fed up and ready to join the resistance.

"We feel there's going to be a media movement in the 1990s," says Lasn, whose Fall/Winter 1991 issue of Adbusters Quarterly is illustrated with etchings of the Boston Tea Party.

Lasn, an emigre Estonian, used to work in the advertising business himself, as a young professional in Japan in the 1960s. But he became interested in filmmaking and moved to Canada, where the government patronizes the domestic film industry.

Lasn and his Japanese wife settled in Vancouver, which happens to be the home of a potent environmental movement. It was here that Lasn came to his belief—accorded ample ground at the recent Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro—that unnecessary consumption and the resulting pressure on the world's resources is the central burden of our age.

Lasn is far from the first person to connect the commercial culture with social and environmental decay, of course. Many media critics, parent-teacher associations and public interest groups before him have stood up before the omnipresence and

offensiveness of advertising and junk TV.

There have been petitions filed with the Federal Communications Commission to keep cartoon shills out of kids' shows; legislation linking improved children's programming to broadcasters' license renewals; a law banning children's commercials outright in the Canadian province of Quebec; preacher-driven boycotts; dire academic laments and woe-is-us books on the perils of too much television.

But media watchdog groups in the United States say they know of no one else using the Adbusters' approach.

Adbusters has so far produced about a dozen anti-consumption spots. One is a clay animation, starring a happy, smiling pig emerging from a map of North America. In the background, a narrator reminds viewers that North Americans constitute 5% of the world's population but consume a third of its resources. "Nothing is destroying this planet faster than the way we North Americans live," intones the voice-over. At the end of the spot, the pig burps resoundingly contentedly.

Lasn had no illusions about getting commercial television stations to run such self-defeating messages as free public-

service spots. He did think, however, that if he had enough money to buy cheap, late-night air time, stations would sell it to him.

After all, even if television executives hated his message, Lasn knew that the airwaves are considered a public resource under law—and that those lucky enough to have a license to work the airwaves for profit have traditionally been obliged to present at least the semblance of a free marketplace of ideas.

"Television is the most powerful medium of our time, and if they won't take your money for your 30-second slot, then you're excluded," he says. "That skews the democratic process."

His plan was to buy low-priced "fringe" time, first in Vancouver, then in Toronto, Canada's biggest media market. From there, he hoped to air his message in Boston—a city with a revolutionary history and famous universities—then in all-comers Los Angeles. Finally, he would penetrate the belly of the advertising beast: Madison Avenue, New York.

Along the way, he hoped, viewers in each region would fall into his crusade, noticing the ads and raising the money to broadcast them in other towns.

To an extent, that has happened in Canada. But Lasn struck out in the Cradle of Liberty itself. All three network affiliates in Boston rejected the Adbusters ads. And in Los Angeles, KABC and KNBC have likewise refused to sell time. (KCBS hasn't given Lasn a yes or no yet.)

"We try not to promote competitors," explained William Emerson of KNBC's broadcasting standards department. "If you say, 'Do not watch television,' you're kind of shooting yourself in the foot, aren't you?" At KABC, broadcasting standards director Georgia Seid said "We would not, of course, air a commercial that told people not to watch television. That's just standard policy." She added that the network rejects all advocacy commercials.

That was much the response Lasn got from the main Canadian network, the CBC, the first time he approached it. In 1989, the forest-products industry, one of the most powerful engines of the Canadian economy, produced a spot called "Forests Forever." The ad showcased the view that Canada's lumber companies were managing the nation's timberlands so responsibly that there would be forests forever.

The ads vexed Lasn, who responded with "Mystical Forests," a counter-advertisement featuring statistics from the University of British Columbia suggesting that loggers—with the blessing of their government regulators—were cutting trees too eagerly for successful regrowth.

Off went Lasn to the CBC, ready to buy a 30-second slot for the ad. But CBC advertising standards people turned him away, arguing that it was network policy to refuse all paid "issue advertising" in order to keep the rich from controlling the Canadian political agenda.

Lasn thought the policy had precisely the opposite outcome in his case: By deeming his save-the-trees spot to be "issue advertising," the CBC was silencing a struggling environmentalist—even as it aired the wholly self-serving claims of the well-financed forestry interests.

Why, he asked, was it an "issue" to say the forests were being cut too fast but not an "issue" to say they were being cut at an acceptable rate? It was a question the CBC was unable to answer.

While Lasn sparred with the CBC, he and some fellow environmentalists started a small, photocopied newsletter to tell other anti-logging groups in the region about their efforts.

"It started to grow," Lasn recalls. "People started coming in with their own stories, about how 10 years ago they couldn't get a [labor] union ad on TV. It was like a groundswell of frustrated media suppression."

The CBC finally pulled the "Forests Forever" ad in the interest of consistency. And Lasn and his colleagues decided to expand their newsletter into a magazine that would deconstruct the consumer culture and its connections with environmental degradation. Adbusters Quarterly was born.

The CBC, meanwhile, went on to scrap its ban on "issue advertising"—network officials found themselves increasingly uncomfortable about silencing paid political messages. The issue that ultimately decided things was that of Canadian national unity. Quebec is scheduled to hold a referendum this fall on whether to secede, and the CBC—whose very mandate calls on it to promote Canadian unity—didn't like turning away pleas to keep the country together paid for by Canadian federalists.

The CBC's policy revision has been a breakthrough for Adbusters. The network's ad standards people now screen the group's commercials one by one, instead of rejecting them all outright. Some have made it onto the air, including a spot showing a dazed-looking, twitchy man staring at a TV screen above the subtitle, "You are what you watch."

"Only the CBC would do this," says the CBC's manager of advertising standards, Roger Kennedy, with a stage groan. (The network is a hybrid, owned by the government but financed by paid commercials.) "I think most broadcasters think it's self-defeating, accepting ads that say watching television is a destructive process. But there is merit in the message. There is such a thing as a saturation point for healthy television viewing."

So, burping pigs and TV zombies have been cropping up in towns from New Brunswick to British Columbia, paid for here and there by journalism professors, church groups, environmentalists, a bookstore owner and some high school students in Red Deer who felt the video culture was cheating them out of a solid education.

At Banff National Park, staff video producer James Martin uses the Adbusters ads to break up the nature documentaries he makes; the documentaries are then shown on cable television in the resort's many hotels.

Lasn says the only complaints have been from Canadian animal-rights activists offended by the burping-pig spot.

He says he's puzzled that his message is more readily accepted in Canada than in the United States, since his stoutest cadres are Americans and more than half of Adbusters Quarterly's circulation is south of the border. (The magazine has a press run of 21,000.)

"Maybe there's less money riding on it here in Canada," Lasn speculates. "I think it also has something to do with our social system in Canada. We're less champions of free enterprise in the United States. Anti-consumption is something nobody wants to hear."

Electronic screens dominate kids' time

By **BOB DART**
Cox News Service

WASHINGTON — American children spend much more time per year in front of electronic screens in their homes — TV, computers and video games — than they spend in school, according to a new national report on children and the media.

The survey found that nearly half of all homes with children 2 to 17 years old have at least one television set, a VCR, video game equipment and a home computer. Three of five kids 12 to 17 years old have a TV set in their room. In homes with children, access to the Internet is nearly as common as subscriptions to newspapers.

As a result, researchers found that more teenagers could name the car-

toon characters on the popular TV show *The Simpsons* than could identify Vice President Al Gore.

"Although television is still dominant, with the introduction of new media, young people are now spending an average of 4½ hours every day sitting in front of a screen of some kind," said Jeffrey Stanger, Washington director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania.

"Rather than displacing television as the dominant medium, new technologies have supplemented it, resulting in an aggregate increase in electronic media penetration and use."

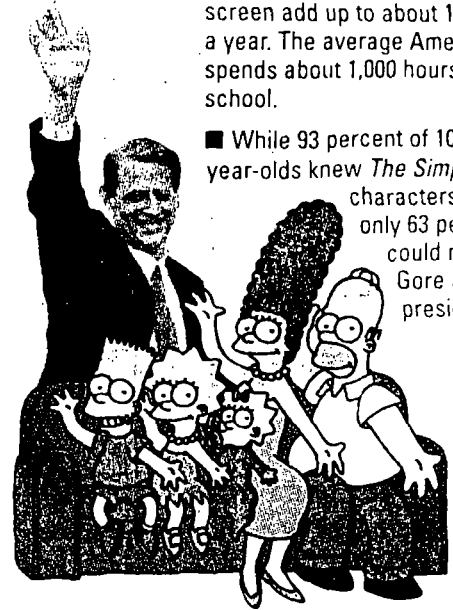
The data are found in four

What the survey found . . .

■ Children spend about 2½ hours a day watching television programs and two hours with video games, computers or the VCR.

■ The 4½ hours a day in front of a screen add up to about 1,642 hours a year. The average American child spends about 1,000 hours a year in school.

■ While 93 percent of 10- to 17-year-olds knew *The Simpsons* characters' names, only 63 percent could name Al Gore as the vice president.



PLEASE SEE CHILDREN, 4A

Media beat school for kids' attention

Daily screen diet is 4½ hours

CHILDREN, FROM 1A

reports that the center released Sunday at its fourth annual Conference on Children and Television.

The 4½ hours a day in front of a screen add up to about 1,642 hours a year. The average American child spends about 1,000 hours a year in school, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

The changes are so profound that, in its fourth year, the Annenberg center has renamed one report "Media in the Home" rather than "Television in the Home."

Children spend about 2½ hours a day watching television programs and two hours with video games, computers or the VCR, the survey found.

Internet, games used more

Other findings: The number of homes with Internet access has doubled since 1996. Video games are available in nine of 10 homes with children — either on home computers or on video game equipment such as Gameboys or both.

The national survey in April and May covered 1,269 parents of 2- to 17-year-olds and 303 of their children, ages 10 to 17, in homes with television sets.

Parents' opinions of children's television are at the lowest point in the four years of the survey. Only 13.6 percent had a positive view of programming for their children.

However, the number of parents who said they have established rules about TV viewing has fallen from a high of about 69 percent in 1997 to about 62 percent in 1999.

Name recognition differs

Confirming the influence of television, the study found that while 93 percent of the 10- to 17-year-olds knew that *The Simpsons* has characters named Homer, Bart and Maggie, only 63 percent could name Al Gore as the

Characters on 'The Simpsons' were found to have wider recognition than Vice President Al Gore.

vice president.

However, the parents also were more familiar with *The Simpsons* — with 84 percent correctly naming the TV show and 80 percent naming the vice president.

In a second study, "The 1999 State of Children's Television Report," the Annenberg researchers found that the quality of children's television has begun to improve.

The researchers found 1,324 programs for children available in a week on all cable and broadcast channels in the Philadelphia television market. That was a 12 percent increase over the previous year.

Measurement of quality

The study also found that the proportion of children's programs containing no enriching material at all dropped to 25 percent, from 48 percent in 1998.

"Some of the improvement in children's television may be attributed to the [Federal Communications Commission's] 'Three Hour Rule,'" said Amy Jordan, director of Annenberg's children's television analysis. The rule requires broadcasters seeking expedited license renewal to air at least three hours of educational programming for children each week.

The study found that virtually all commercial broadcasting stations are airing these programs at times when children are awake and in the audience, and that most of the programs do have educational value. However, only 6 percent of programs for children are aired during prime time in the evenings.

Television overload deserves some blame for attention deficit

As heralded by a cover story in Time (Feb. 3, 1997) and a special issue of Newsweek (spring/summer '97) the big story of the past year has concerned the most astonishing breakthrough in the field of child development — proof that brain-cell propagation during the critical formative years (birth to age 6) is largely a function of the environment.

An environment rich in social stimulation and opportunity to explore invigorates brain development, and vice versa. It now appears that while genes may set an upper limit on a child's general abilities, the more specific the aptitude (language, music, fine-motor), the more likely it is that early experience is the primary shaper.



**JOHN
ROSEMOND**
PARENTS

These findings have direct bearing on the most controversial subject in education: attention deficit disorder.

Until now, the dialogue concerning ADD has been dominated by a troika of professionals who specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of ADD; a lobby-support group called Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder; and Ciba-Sandoz, the maker of Ritalin, a stimulant administered to about 90 percent of ADD children. The "ADD Establishment," as I call the three, have steadfastly insisted that ADD is genetic.

The latest evidence from the field of brain development, however, indicates that a deficiency of this sort can be explained primarily in terms of early environmental factors.

At this point, the proverbial sticky wicket arises, because disproportionate numbers of ADD-diagnosed children come from middle- and upper-middle class families. Their parents tend to be indignant toward any suggestion that they failed to create optimal

environments.

But in almost every one of the homes in question, there sits at least one television set, and we know the average American child watches in excess of 5,000 hours of television before he reaches first grade.

The picture on a TV screen changes, or flickers, every three to four seconds. A child watching a 30-minute TV program, therefore, isn't paying attention to any one image for longer than a few seconds. Multiply that by 5,000 hours of watching during the years most crucial to brain development, and it is hardly far-fetched to suppose that the attention span of the child in question will be compromised.

The ADD Establishment will, howl at this hypothesis, claiming it "blames" the parents. The fact is, if one has no way of knowing — as was the case — that a certain something can cause harm to children, then one can hardly be blamed for allowing a child exposure to it.

Besides, if it turns out that ADD can result from letting a young child watch television, then parents are actually empowered. With early detection and intervention, ADD can be significantly reversed, if not "cured."

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Television, depression go hand in hand in study

The Hartford Courant

Since World War II, more and more children and young people have suffered from serious depression. The risk keeps rising.

Why? Explanations have focused on such factors as divorce rates and single-parent homes.

Paul Kettl, an associate professor of psychiatry at Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine, looked at another possibility.

Comparing the growth of television and depression, "our conclusion is that the rise of television corresponds with the rise in major depression almost exactly, and you have to take that into consideration," Kettl says.

Kettl compared the rates of major depression in people up to age 24 with 10-year averages of the number of televisions in use, the number of households with televisions and the number of families with more than one TV set. "As things turn out, they're exactly the same curve," he says. "As television grows, so does the rate of major depression."

That isn't proof that television is related to depression, "because correlation does not

Although this correlation does not imply television causes depression, the results raise a question about viewing.

imply causation. There are lots of other things happening." But the results "make the question a better question to raise."

"If you think that television is important, which I think it is, the question is, 'Why and how could it be related to depression?'" Kettl says. "The strongest reason is that when you're watching television, you're not doing other things."

According to Nielsen data, American children from age 2 on watch an average of three to four hours a day, Kettl says. "And that's every day, day in and day out, Sundays, holidays." The time is subtracted from being with parents and friends, and from play.

"That is an incredible amount of time to be taken out of your life," Kettl says. It removes children from the relationships and activities they need to develop best.

TAMING THE TERRIBLE TUBE



Unrestricted viewing is introducing our children to adult problems before their time. How and why should you control what they watch?

When you begin to talk about children and television you enter into a very touchy area. There are some very sincere people out there who really believe that television is a demonic device that ought to be stuffed into another new device—the trash compactor—and reduced to little squares of transistorized debris.

For example Marie Winn, in her book *The Plug-In Drug* (Penguin, 1985), maintains that "to work for better [children's] programs...is not unlike dealing with alcoholism by striving to replace cheap whiskey with Chivas Regal." Neil Postman asserts that television requires and develops no skills and has the potential to put our minds to sleep (*The Disappearance of Childhood*, W.H. Allen, 1983). And even Jim Trelease, *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, felt compelled to include a chapter that lists seventeen terrible things television can do to children.

We know about television. We grew up with it. We have watched it almost every day of our lives. We spent our childhood with "Spin and Marty" and "Mickey Mouse," with "The Waltons," "The Brady Bunch," "Happy Days," and "Days of Our Lives." But as we sit down and watch the television that our children will be growing up on, as we watch MTV and "Voltron," and sample "Inhumanoids" and "the Equalizer," we get the feeling that someone has taken the old familiarity of TV and twisted it somehow, making it strange and alien, frightening and tinged with danger.

It is this fear of the unfamiliar, this discomfort with technological change, that seems in part to have motivated the comments by Winn, Postman and Trelease. And that is not hard to understand, because when we look at televi-

BY ROBERT SHRAG

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN LENG

sion as adults, it is a frightening landscape we see. Many an evening my wife and I have hit the couch after putting the kids to bed, ready for an hour of "make-the-world-go-away-TV." Instead we find, as we run up and down the buttons of the remote, a seemingly unending stream of the loud, the violent, and the vacuous—and those are only the commercials!

People give a number of reasons why access to television needs to be controlled, but all those reasons are really variations on the most obvious reasons: we have pro-

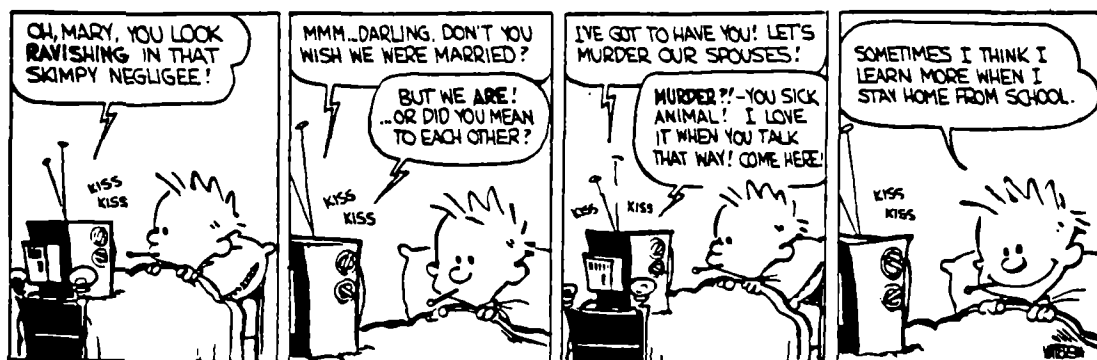
GOLDEN RULES OF TELEVISION

1 There is a difference between a *character* and a *real person*. I started teaching this rule with "Sesame Street." When Andrea was barely a year and a half old, we would sit and watch the program while playing the "real and character game." When Big Bird came on the screen I would say

leads us again into that area of uncertainty. I can't tell you which programs are inappropriate for your children and your family—but you certainly can! And the first step in making those decisions is learning what the major areas of caution are—what you need to watch out for.

THE SEX AND VIOLENCE ISSUE

This issue is really two separate issues, but they are often lumped together as one concern, as a matter of fact they are often lumped together as one word, "sexnviolence." I've heard it used for years at television conferences, "What do you think about the sexnviolence issue?" or "How do you think we can best address the concerns arising from sexnviolence on television?" Well, call me an old-fashioned romantic if you will, but I see them as totally separate issues, irreconcilable concepts. Once you add violence to sex it is no longer sex, just a more abusive



grams on television today that are just not appropriate for children, but they can still be seen and "understood" by children. Joshua Meyrowitz's book about the effect of electronic media on social behavior, *No Sense of Place* (Oxford University Press, 1985), contains a chapter called "The Blurring of Childhood and Adulthood." In this chapter Meyrowitz discusses how television eliminates many of the barriers that existed between the adult world and the world of children when print was the dominant form of mass communication.

No argument there, I mean how many six-year-old kids can read *Lady Chatterleys Lover*? And even if the most precocious six-year-olds in pre-TV days figured out the words, they would have had—in most instances—no experience that could give the words *real* meaning. They literally would not have been able to picture what was going on, so the words would have no meaning.

The case today is a very different one; any six-year-old can, if allowed, turn on the soap opera that bills itself as "Love in the Afternoon." There, adult language will be spoken, adult behavior will be overt, and adult intentions clear—dropping the six-year-old into a rather sleazy depiction of the adult world of love, lust, deception, and power.

So the existence of inappropriate programs is one reason to control children's exposure to television. But deciding which programs are appropriate and which are not

something like, "Oh! There's Big Bird, he's a puppet—what a lovely character!" And then when Maria came on I would say, "And here comes Maria, she's a real person, she's a woman just like Mommy." And so it would go: as each performer, animal, vegetable, or puppet, played their part, I would deem them either real people or characters. I played by myself for the first few months, but soon Andrea began to play along, asking about certain performers, "Is she a real person or a character?" and volunteering information about others, "The cows are puppets, they aren't real." She was soon able to make that important distinction, not only on "Sesame Street," but on most children's programs. This naturally made it easier to teach her...

2 There is a difference between *real* and *make-believe*. Fred Rogers and his long-running program, "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood," gives us some excellent assistance in teaching our children this rule. "Mister Rogers" contains a regular program segment called "Neighborhood of Make-Believe." It doesn't take too many trips to the "Neighborhood of Make-Believe" for even two to three-year-olds to begin to understand the differences.

form of violence. But that is another issue: our concern here is with television programs that feature obviously sexual or obviously violent material, or both. We want to know what their impact is, and we want to know how to deal with them in the context of the family. Well, the first thing that we do is to simply remove from the list of acceptable choices those programs that we, as a family—or as parents—deem objectionable. That is the kernel of our first option in the sexnviolence issue: control access.

This is a hard one to enforce, especially with older children, but it is easier once we stop and define some basics again. Free access to television programs is *not* a feature of the Bill of Rights. Children do not have an inalienable right to watch sleazy TV. Given the choice, they will often choose to watch adult programs, but you as a parent are not required to give them that choice. *All* their friends do *not* watch "Dallas," or "Dynasty," or even "St. Elsewhere" or "L.A. Law." There are a lot of programs out there, sleazy and otherwise, that are just not suitable for children. You would not hesitate to control your children's access to substances that might harm them: drugs, alcohol, tobacco, twinkies, etc. You need not hesitate to control their exposure to television programs you deem objectionable either.

The first are all the programs which focus on content, relationships, and issues that fall outside the purview of

childhood. David Elkind has written an excellent book called *The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon* (Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1989), in which he discusses the myriad ways we have devised to strip the luxury of childhood innocence from our children by forcing them into adult roles more and more quickly. By allowing our children to watch adult programming, we force them to address adult issues and concerns before they are intellectually and emotionally ready to do so. That is not to say that they cannot adapt, that they cannot learn about those issues. The world has proved quite adequately that young children can "deal with" the harsh realities of divorce, sexual abuse, drug abuse, violence, and hatred. The question we need to address is whether we want them to learn about those issues before it is absolutely necessary. And regardless of timing, we need to ask whether we want them to learn about those issues from the slick offerings of commercial television. I think not.

The second reason children should not watch adult programs is that they should be in bed. I cannot believe I just said that, but I did, and I am even a little surprised at how strongly I believe it. But my belief is based on two perspectives. First, I am a teacher. I have taught college students all my adult life. I like to think of myself as a good teacher, an interesting teacher — sometimes, as even a charismatic and dynamic teacher. But kids still fall asleep in my classes. I must admit that there are some days when I really do not blame them. Not all aspects of media criticism are fascinating. But I become angry and frustrated when interesting things are going on and a normally bright and attentive student just drops off because he or she can't keep the old peepers open. Sometimes you get an apology — "I had to work late," "It was my roommate's twenty-first birthday," etc. — but the point is that students cannot concentrate and learn when they *need more sleep*. What is true for young adults who frequent my classrooms is even more important for young children whose bodies are still pouring huge amounts of energy into simply growing.

Our second option on the sex and violence issue is to make sure that we *define values*. How we as parents define our attitudes about sex and violence is going to have a great influence upon how our chil-

dren come to understand those dynamic concepts. Any swift review of human history will reveal that peoples attitudes about sex, and about the use of force in conflict, are as varied as humankind itself. And I certainly have no intention of telling you where your family should stand on those issues. But what I am suggesting—very strongly—is that you make sure your child knows where *you* stand on these issues.

SEX

If you follow the control access game carefully, sex on television really should not be much of a problem for children in the "McKid's Clothes" age range (infants to six or seven). "It's Your First Kiss Charlie Brown" is about as racy as it should get. This issue is of much more concern with adolescents and older children who are discovering their sexuality in relationships and are unsure about how sex and relationships go together.

However, we cannot control access to television completely, and it is vital that we realize two important issues about young children and sex. Let's consider a program for kids in this age range that allows us to examine both issues, "The Berenstain Bears' Easter Surprise." In this program Mama Bear's lap disappears when she is pregnant with Sister Bear and reappears after sister is

song and the program ends.

The first important issue that the program raises is that no information is better than misinformation. Papa Bear, like many parents, is uncomfortable discussing sex and reproduction with his young son. So he chooses to avoid the issue. This is not the best choice, but it is far better than giving misinformation. Most people try to tell the truth to children, but there is a tendency to hedge when it comes to sex. There are many highly-educated, professional, truthful people who are totally honest with their children about every aspect of their lives, except sex. And in that area—instead of going with Papa Bear's no information option, they tell their children outrageous things: "Daddy gave Mommy something special to eat and it made a baby in her tummy." The problem is that—when your lie is inevitably discovered—you have taught your kids two bad things. First, you have taught them not to trust you as a source of information regarding sex. Second, and potentially more damaging, you have taught them that *even if you tell the truth about everything else* it is acceptable to lie about sex.

Which brings us to the second important issue about children and sex: Accurate information is better than no information. Our policy has always been to tell the truth when you could, and to tell nothing when



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born. In one early scene Brother Bear asks, "What happened to Mama's lap?" Papa Bear - as is his wont — grins foolishly and changes the subject. Later in the program, after Sister has been born, Brother Bear asks directly, "Papa, where did the baby come from?" Papa bravely responds, "Uh, that ones for your mother." Mother Bear takes Brother up on her reconstructed lap and says, referring to a song from earlier in the program, "Do you remember about the robins? And the miracle of birth? Well..." At which point Brother interrupts with, "Mama! Your lap is back!" The narrator intones, "And so it was." We break to a

the truth seemed inappropriate for discussion with that particular kid, that particular point in time. But that leads us to another question. How do you tell the truth? What words do you use to tell your little Brother Bears "where the baby came from?" And, how do we know what truth is important, when?

Most of the time parents do not have the Berenstain Bears' option of breaking to a song and ending the show. They have to come up with answers, which ideally should be consistent with the values of the household. It is clearly beyond the scope of this article to provide such answers, but fortu-

nately for tongue-tied parents everywhere, the question "Where did the baby come from?" is the central concern of a number of excellent books.

VIOLENCE

Without a doubt, violence causes the greatest concern among parents of young children. Visions of Wiley Coyote flattened under huge boulders dance in our heads, and we are afraid that our children will act out those visions in the living room, on the playground, in the classroom, and eventually in the Home for Terminally Incurable Children.

As usual, there are grounds for concern. Unlike sex, violence has become a staple of children's television and cannot be simply eliminated. There is a very simple reason for

again that we need to use some common sense as we provide guidelines for television viewing for young children. We need to remember that any kind of television in excess is not good for children—if for no other reason than it squeezes out beneficial activities like reading and playing outside. But limiting exposure to specific types of television moves a bit beyond that basic idea. In the section above, we discussed limiting a young child's access to the sexually explicit messages of adult television for the simple reason that such messages should have no place in the world of childhood. On the other hand, we acknowledged that even very good programs for children often lead to questions about sexuality and reproduction. And we discussed the advisability of answering those questions as hon-

means—"Oh, yea, that sounds neat. Maybe we'll make some popcorn and watch it together,"—and by overt bribery—"If you don't watch 'Captain Power' this week, I'll let you watch an extra hour of programs we agree are OK." (Sometimes you do what works right now and worry about damage controller.)

■ **THIRD**, and this is very important, we keep our children company during those conflict-laden programs they are loath to desert, and we flail about with the two golden rules of television as we go. "Oh look. Here come those cartoon monsters again. I'm really glad that they're just characters in a program and not real people." And, "Wow! Did you see how he punched that guy out? Good thing this is just make-believe. If people behaved that way in real life they'd spend the whole day on the time-out chair."

It is vital that we maintain step three, that we continue to emphasize—as often as we can stand to, and as long as the kids might possibly be listening—that television is not real, that the behaviors that characters demonstrate in make-believe situations are different from the behaviors that real people are expected to demonstrate in real life.

Given all the things I have asked you to consider doing in this chapter I realize that, at first blush, it seems as though you will spend more time taking care of your kid's television habits than doing anything else. That is only true for a little while. It's like learning to drive a standard-shift vehicle. The first time you do it, it seems like an endless string of complex tasks. Now you do it all without waking up—a very bad idea—but something we often catch ourselves doing.

Starting your children on the right road to wise television usage is the same sort of process—it seems difficult and complex at first, but you will be amazed how fast they can pick up good viewing habits. Believe me, it is worth the effort.

with permission from Taming The Terrible Tube, The University of North Carolina Press, 1990. Robert L. Schrag lives with his wife and two daughters in Raleigh, North Carolina, where he teaches media criticism at North Carolina State University. He is coauthor of Rhetorical Perspectives on Communication and the



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that, a reason that is tied to the central structure of drama: conflict. All drama is based on some sort of conflict; if there is no conflict there is no plot, no action, no interest. And of course, there must be a resolution of the conflict. Good guys have to win, bad guys have to lose.

The problem most parents encounter is that resolution in children's television often occurs through some sort of physical mayhem. And they worry that the modeling of that mayhem will lead to the violent, aggressive behavior that eventually gets children into trouble with the law, or at least makes them persona non grata at the better birthday parties in the neighborhood, and at grandmother's house. However, the jury is still out on that question. As Robert M. Liebert and Joyce Sprafkin point out in their excellent book *The Early Window: Effects of Television on Children and Youth* (Pergamon 1988), it seems fairly clear that there is a strong link between watching violent television and increased aggressiveness in children. But they also point out that television is only a cause, not the cause; there is no one cause of aggressive behavior in children.

Nonetheless, these findings demonstrate

estly as possible — both to maintain our credibility for later, more in-depth discussions and to prevent misinformation and neighborhood mythology from becoming a significant part of our children's sex education.

If you stop and think about it for a moment that really is just another application of the two golden rules of television we have already talked about: There is a difference between *characters* and *real people*; there is a difference between *real* and *make-believe*. Those same rules will stand us in good stead as we follow three steps designed to deal with the dominant presence of violence in children's television.

■ **FIRST**, we control access by limiting the amount of time a child can spend watching TV — all types of TV. You can do this on the basis of hours per day or hours per week. It really does not matter as long as you make it stick within reasonable limits. You might want to put a chart up next to the TV to record what programs your child has chosen to watch and to mark off the hours of the viewing allotment that have been used up.

■ **SECOND**, we encourage our kids to watch "good" programs, both by subtle

GEORGE F. WILL

Television viewing a prime cause of the epidemic of violence

WASHINGTON — An Indiana school board had to issue an advisory to children, who had been crawling into storm drains, that there were no Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles down there. To understand why this was necessary is to understand one of the causes of America's epidemic of violence.



And the path to understanding that Indiana advisory can begin in a remote Canadian community that in 1973 (signal reception problems having been overcome) was due to acquire television. Social scientists seized the opportunity to investigate the effects of television on this community's children, using for comparison two similar towns that had long had television.

Before TV was belatedly intro-

duced, they monitored rates of inappropriate physical aggression among 45 first- and second-graders. After two years of TV, the rate increased 160 percent, in both boys and girls, and in both those who were aggressive to begin with and those who were not. The rate in the two communities that had had television for years did not change.

Other researchers studied third-grade, fourth-grade and fifth-grade boys in two Indian communities in northern Manitoba. One got TV in 1973, the other in 1977. The aggressiveness of boys in the first community increased immediately; in the second it increased four years later.

A study from 1960 to 1981 of 875 children in a semirural U.S. county (controlled for baseline aggressiveness, intelligence and socioeconomic status) found that among persons subsequently convicted of crimes, the more TV they had watched by age 8, the more

serious their subsequent crimes. A "second generation effect": The more TV a parent had watched as a child, the more severely that parent punished children.

Seven U.S. and Canadian studies establish correlations between prolonged childhood exposure to TV and a proclivity for physical aggressiveness extending from pre-adolescence into adulthood. All this is reported in "The Public Interest" quarterly by Brandon S. Centerwall, an epidemiologist at the University of Washington.

He used a historical oddity — because of disagreement between Afrikaner and English-speaking South Africans, that nation had no television prior to 1975 — to study the effect of television on violence rates in the prosperous industrial society of white South Africans.

He studied homicide rates among white South Africans, white Americans and all Canadians. From 1945 to 1974 the white homicide rate in the United States

increased 93 percent; in Canada, 92 percent; in South Africa, it declined 7 percent.

Neither economic growth, civil unrest, age distribution, urbanization, alcohol consumption, capital punishment nor the availability of firearms explain the 10-to-15 year span between the introduction of television and the doubling of the homicide rate in the United States and Canada — or the similar lag in South Africa after 1975. Furthermore, Centerwall believes that the introduction of television helps explain different rates of homicide growth for American whites and minorities.

White households began acquiring TV sets in large numbers approximately five years before minority households. White homicide rates began increasing in 1958. A parallel rise in minority homicide rates began four years later.

A 14-month-old infant can adopt behavior it has seen on television. Because young children are

unable to distinguish fact from fantasy, they regard television as information about how the world works. (Hence the need for the Indiana school board's advisory). And, Centerwall says, in the world as television presents it, violence is ubiquitous, exciting, charismatic and effective.

"In later life, serious violence is most likely to erupt at moments of severe stress — and it is precisely at such moments that adolescents and adults are most likely to revert to their earliest, most visceral sense of the role of violence in society and in personal behavior. Much of this sense will have come from television."

So what can be done? Centerwall believes that violence is a public health problem deserving measures as practical as nutrition, immunization and bicycle helmet programs. He suggests requiring all television sets to be manufactured with locking devices by which parents can control chil-

dren's access to a set or to particular channels. But such devices presuppose the sort of parents who would not need them: parents alert to the dangerous degradation of taste and behavior by entertainment saturated with violence.

Wiser parents are the only hope because, as Centerwall understands, there is no hope for cooperation from the television industry. It exists to draw audiences for advertisers. Desensitized Americans are attracted by ever stronger doses of ever more graphic violence. A decline of 1 percent of advertising revenues would cut the television industry's revenues a quarter of a billion dollars.

So as Centerwall says, it is as idle to expect television to help combat the epidemic of violence that is derivative from violent entertainment as it is to expect the tobacco industry to help combat the epidemic of lung cancer that is a comparable sign of that industry's sickening health.

NEWS YOU CAN USE

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...ending for 2000.
"Endgame" and "Krapp's
Last Tape" by the famed
San Quentin Drama
Workshop. The playwright's
final directorial effort
before his death in 1989.

THE LIST



■ **CALORIC TELEVISION?** Tune in, drop out, get fat. According to a study in this month's issue of *Pediatrics*, the very act of watching television may be fattening. Researchers at Memphis State University and the University of Tennessee, Memphis, found that 8-to-12-year-old girls who watched one episode of "The Wonder Years" (picked for its moderate pace and its appeal to children) burned fewer calories than they did while lying in bed for 25 minutes. The scientists found that TV watching slowed the metabolism of both obese and normal-weight girls. They offer two possible explanations: Children fidget less when watching TV than when resting or TV puts children into a near-meditative state. The researchers caution that their findings might not apply to violent or interactive programs. But the work might help explain why children who watch a lot of TV tend to be fatter than those who don't. Other scientists think that TV watchers are tubbier for the obvious reasons: They exercise less and munch more.

VIDEO

KID VID

Boob Tube Babies

Your Child And Television Viewing

by C. Fred Bateman

WHEN THE HISTORY OF THE twentieth century is written, it may well be concluded that television has been the most powerful single force in shaping human values and in changing the patterns of society. Not only does television take up a great deal of the average person's time, it profoundly influences our way of thinking.

We are living in a time when watching television is what we do more than anything but work and sleep. There is at least one television in virtually every home in the United States, regardless of one's socio-economic status.

What is the effect of this powerful medium on our children? After all, a child is taught by television long before he is taught by teachers. His mind is filled with heroes and heroines, and he views reality as well as distortions of reality.

Numerous groups have looked into the possible negative impact of television on children. Most of these studies are deemed to be valid because they were broadly based and because they were carefully documented. Some of the findings are as follows:

- The more television a child watches, the worse he does in school.

- Heavy viewers of television comprehend less of what they read than do light viewers.

- Gifted elementary-age students show a marked drop in creative abilities after just three weeks of intense television viewing.

- Children who see a great deal of violence on television are more likely than children who see less to engage in aggressive play and to accept force as an appropriate problem solver.

- Because on prime-time shows sexual intercourse is seven times more likely to occur between unmarried couples than between husband and wife, at least one study concluded that

children are influenced into believing that that type of sexual behavior is an accepted norm rather than a deviation from the norm. Certainly, casual sexual activity is portrayed as acceptable.

- Many researchers believe that television exposes children to the adult world before they are ready for it, and that causes confusion in their minds as they attempt to sort things out.

- Many people have concluded that children are manipulated by unscrupulous advertisers (particularly on the Saturday morning cartoon shows).

They say that children do not possess the mature level of judgement to distinguish between programming and advertising, for example.

Did the researchers find any positive effects of television? Certainly. There can be no doubt that judiciously selected programs can beneficially broaden

children's experiences. Television can become a child's window on the world. Youngsters can see the world's most accomplished actors, musicians, and dancers as they portray works of great writers and composers. Current events can be viewed as they are happening anywhere in the world.

Other positive conclusions, drawn from recent studies, are the following:

- A TV protagonist displaying positive behavior has more impact upon children's subsequent play than does a character encouraging violence.

- One study concluded that the average IQ of children may be rising because of television viewing.

- There are many positive reports of the use of television in the capacity of an "electronic classroom." Using televi-

sion in this way is especially helpful for homes and schools in remote areas.

- Television can make great works of literature "come alive." One study even concluded that reading may actually be stimulated by television used in this way.

What can parents do to maximize the positive effects and minimize the negative effects? Most parents, according to surveys, have no idea how much television their children actually watch. Yet, the number of hours the average child devotes to watching television means that an equivalent amount of time at home is unavailable for reading or hobbies or conversation with parents. In our complex society, reading is more important than ever.

If television is to teach as well as entertain, children must be encouraged to watch a wide variety of programs. Parental guidance is necessary because a show's lesson may be obvious to adults and not to children or adolescents, especially if it deals with a problem the children are currently facing.

Many people are concerned about the distorted values and unrealistic goals that are seen frequently in today's younger generation. They wonder if the image of the world portrayed on television (and in movies) may have contributed to this.

Even when children are quite young, they are likely to see "soap operas" and "sitcoms" that show adult relationships that may not be normal or typical. On any one of the three major commercial channels throughout a weekday afternoon, one can see frequent sex without love, marriage, or responsibility.

In addition to distorted scenes about love, marriage, and sex, young viewers see the actors solving their

problems through power and violence rather than through discussion. One wonders if the Rambos and Equalizers of the screen will permanently influence the problem-solving techniques of future adults.

Again, like so many other things, it falls on parents and teachers to clear the air. What specific actions can parents take?

- Limit the amount of television your child watches. Decide in advance with your family when the television will be on and off.

- Serve as an example by limiting the amount of television you yourself watch.

- Watch some of the same programs your child watches. Yes, much of it will be childish and boring; however, this will help you understand what your child is seeing and hearing and may help you understand what influences him or her.

- Have your children keep a weekly journal on what is watched. Have them write down unfamiliar words they hear, list adjectives that describe the programs they saw, and then have them rate the quality of each program on a scale between one and ten. Make sure they can defend their conclusions.

- Encourage your children to evaluate commercials on television.

- Help your children see the useful side of television. When a crisis of some kind is being reported on television, call your children into the room and have them see it, too. Talk to them about it afterward, and help them put it in perspective.

- Encourage your children to watch programs that have been carefully oriented for healthy viewing by children.

The "one-eyed monster" can be harmful. It can also be positive. When parents assume their proper responsibility for leadership on how television is used, however, another step toward the empowerment of your child will have been taken.

C. Fred Bateman is Superintendent, Chesapeake (Virginia) Public Schools.

Encourage your children to evaluate commercials on television.

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Lester
TBO

Cholesterol said linked to TV diet

CHICAGO (Reuter) — Children who watch too much television may unwittingly be risking higher cholesterol levels.

A study, published yesterday in the journal *Pediatrics*, found television viewing — not a family history of early heart attacks or cholesterol problems — was a more likely indicator of high levels of cholesterol in children.

Researchers looked at 1,381 children, aged 2 to 20 years and found 8 per cent had a cholesterol level of 260 milligrams or higher, a level considered too high in adults. Of those, 88 per cent watched TV two or more hours daily.

Children who watched television more than four hours a day were less likely to consume lean meat or engage in continuous physical activity outside of school.

TV warning on violence no cure for larger illness

By Leonard D. Eron

For the last 30 years, in the face of mounting research evidence that televised violence has a deleterious effect on child viewers and is one of the causes of youth violence in society at this time, the television industry has insisted that no such linkage exists or indeed has been proven.

Ever since the first studies came out in the early '60s relating increased aggressiveness in children to the violent content of the television programs they were watching, spokespersons for the TV industry have criticized the studies because, they claimed, the effects were too small to be meaningful or the behaviors that were affected were not serious antisocial acts. However, a recent summary of more than 200 studies published through 1990 offers convincing evidence that the observation of violence, as seen in standard everyday television entertainment, does affect the aggressive behavior of the viewer.

The results from study to study are robust. All types of aggressive behavior, including illegal behavior and criminal violence, had highly significant effects associated with exposure to television violence. The studies using criminal violence and other illegal activities as criteria of aggressive behavior yielded comparable findings to studies in which less violent aggressive behavior was the criterion. Thus the behaviors affected by viewing television violence are indeed cause for social concern.

For example, the longitudinal studies which Rowell Huesmann and I have done and which are now just one element in this compelling body of research, have shown that the extent to which 8-year-olds in 1960 watched the shows that were then considered violent (e.g., "Gunsmoke," "77 Sunset Strip") was related to how many physical fights they got into 11 years later when they were 19 and then to how often they were arrested for violent crimes by the time they were 30.

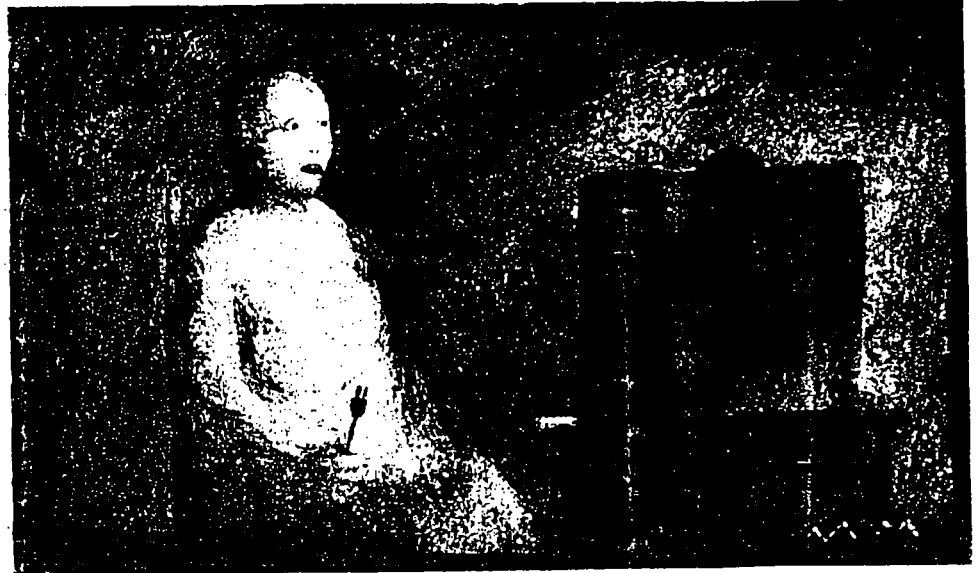
The first time Huesmann and I testified to the Congress on this matter was in 1972, subsequent to the issuance of a report by the surgeon general that had concluded, citing both experimental evidence as well as longitudinal field studies, including our own, that there was a direct causal link between exposure to televised violence and subsequent aggressive behavior of the viewer.

Since that time, as more and more evidence has accumulated about the causal link between media violence and real-life violence, and as more and more congressional committees have investigated the state of affairs, the graphic depiction of media violence has continued unabated.

I remember that after giving our testimony at the hearings in 1972 we were followed by the presidents of ABC, CBS and NBC. While each of them expressed skepticism about our research findings, they agreed nonetheless to lower the level of violence in their programming. It was a promise they never fulfilled. TV violence has not diminished over the last three decades and has increased significantly. Further, any suggestion that producers and writers might tone down the level of violence in their productions has been interpreted as an attack on freedom of expression and a violation of 1st Amendment rights.

Industry representatives have insisted they are only giving the viewing audience what they want, oblivious to the fact that by overproducing such programs they might be creating the demand, and overlooking the fact that two of the most popular programs in recent TV history have been "The Cosby Show" and "Cheers," neither of which showed violent sequences of any significance over the years in which they were broadcast.

Now with rising public protest about the level of violence on TV and films and with increasing concern expressed by lawmakers and congressional



Matt Mahurin/Los Angeles Times

investigators about what can be done to reduce and control this filmed mayhem, the TV industry monolith has finally moved—about a centimeter. The networks have agreed to warn viewers before a violent episode is shown with an announcement stating that "due to some violent content parental discretion is advised." Further, such programs will be noted in the daily newspaper and TV magazine listings.

As yet there have been no criteria devised as to what constitutes violent content or agreement among the networks, and it is uncertain who will make the judgment about how much violence is too much. Also the Saturday morning cartoons, for some unknown reason, have been exempted. These, of course, are among the most violent programs, and they do influence young children's behavior despite the fact that the characters are obviously not real persons.

It has been demonstrated that young children cannot make the distinction between fantasy and reality very easily until about the age of 8. The continually violent sequences in the cartoons, with characters being blown up and miraculously coming together again, give youngsters a false impression that violence has no permanent effects. Then desensitization to violence begins when these sequences are repeated over and over again in almost every cartoon, and children keep watching them, attracted by the high activity level.

However, there is progress. For the first time the television industry has admitted that there is a problem and they have a responsibility to do something about it. But what they have decided to do thus far might actually exacerbate the problem by attracting unsupervised young viewers. The parents most likely to heed such warning labels are those concerned parents who are already monitoring their children's viewing and have the time to watch TV with their children and check on what they are viewing.

Unfortunately many parents cannot monitor their children's television habits, e.g., single parents and those in families where both parents are working. Even more unfortunate is the number of parents who are unconcerned about what their children watch and are unlikely to be affected by the advisory.

Research has shown that TV has its greatest impact on children living in high crime areas of the inner city. These are youngsters who encounter

violence on the way to and from school. When they finally get home, after dodging bullets in the street, cowering in hallways and behind doors, they cannot leave home because of the dangers outside. So they stay home and watch television. And what do they see on television? More violence. This validates their experience.

These children come to believe that aggression is an appropriate and expected behavior, the norm, the way to solve interpersonal problems, relieve frustrations and obtain material things others seem to have but of which they are deprived. This is why labeling of programs will not be effective. For these children there will be no one to turn off the television. It is for similar reasons that a device being developed that will permit parents to block out whole programs for a week at a time will not be successful in reducing the exposure to violence of those most susceptible to its influence.

The only thing that will work is a reduction of the total amount of violence on TV to which young people are exposed. One solution has been proposed by the National Foundation to Improve Television, which currently has a petition before the FCC for the institution of a rule that will designate the hours of 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. as child viewing hours. During this time there will be no violent programs shown. Three years ago Sen. Paul Simon (D-ILL.) sponsored legislation exempting the networks from antitrust prosecution if they got together to see what they could do to lower the level of violence. The act is about to expire.

However, on Aug. 2 television and motion picture executives will get together in Los Angeles to map strategies to lower the amount of violence in programming. Three academic researchers (Dr. George Gerbner of University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Edwin Donnerstein of the University of California at Santa Barbara and I) have been invited to address the group at the first session in the morning. I hope they listen to us, acknowledge our scientific findings and spend the rest of the day figuring out how they can cooperate to reduce the level of violence significantly and thus begin to reduce one of the causes of youth violence in our country.

Leonard Eron is research professor emeritus at the University of Illinois at Chicago and is currently research scientist and professor of psychology at the University of Michigan.

Many U.S. Children Don't Read Enough, Can't Analyze the Material, Study Finds

By HILARY STOUT

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WASHINGTON — Many American children read fewer than 11 pages a day at home or in school and consequently can't adequately interpret and analyze what they read, according to a new study.

Moreover, many teachers seem to be ignoring reading curriculum reforms and instead are sticking largely to workbook instruction, said the study by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a congressionally mandated project administered by the Education Department to measure student performance.

Students also don't spend much time discussing what they read in the classrooms, writing about what they read, using the library or reading in their spare time — all of which are widely considered to improve a student's reading ability.

"I think the message for teachers is that students today need to write more and talk more about what they read," Education Secretary Lamar Alexander said yesterday at a news conference to release the study. "That may not have always been true, but today's jobs require that people communicate."

The study was based on test and survey results of a 1990 sampling of fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-graders. At all three grades, the students who read more read better than average.

But 45% of fourth-graders, 63% of eighth-graders and 59% of twelfth-graders said they read fewer than 11 pages a day. At the same time, 62% of fourth-graders, 64% of eighth-graders and 40% of twelfth-graders said they watched at least three hours of television a day. A quarter of the fourth graders said they watched more than six hours of TV daily.

Mr. Alexander urged parents to limit the time their children spend watching TV. "It is not one of the national education goals that we'd be first in the world in the

amount of television our children watch, although it is one we're about to reach," he asserted.

Instead, the education secretary suggested that parents read to their children for 15 minutes at bedtime each night and get them library cards at an early age — even as young as three years old.

Interest in reading seems to wane as students get older. Forty-three percent of fourth-graders, 40% of eighth-graders and 39% of twelfth-graders claimed they read almost every day in their spare time. But only seven percent of fourth-graders, 10% of eighth-graders and 13% of twelfth-graders said they read outside school a few times a year.

The study also said that a quarter of the fourth-graders and a fifth of the eighth-graders reported they never discussed what they read in class.

In addition, students scored dismally on reading comprehension tests. According to the study, fourth-graders were asked to read a story about a cat who wishes he could fly and the obstacles he encounters trying to realize that dream. The test asked the students to describe how the cat's feelings changed throughout the story. More than two-thirds of the students — 69% — turned in answers that were graded "vague," while 22% were rated "correct" and 9% "partially correct." No one scored in the top category — "elaborated."

Students in the eighth and twelfth grades were asked to read a tale about a man fighting for survival in the Arctic wilderness who was "armed with only a knife and his courage." They were asked to explain the two functions of the knife. The answers from 54% of the eighth-graders and 29% of the twelfth-graders were graded "unacceptable." And the explanations of 46% of the eighth-graders and 59% of the twelfth-graders were considered "satisfactory." Only 1% of eighth-graders and 7% of twelfth-graders achieved the top score.

SOURCE: THE WALL STREET JOURNAL 5/29/92

In Conversati An alternative Catholic spaper
Karen Mamone, our cooking expert, sheds a tear for Wethersfield

THE HARTFORD COURANT SUNDAY MAGAZINE / OCTOBER 24, 1993

Northeast

EXPLORING THE WASTELAND

From Barney
to Beavis and Butt-head,
two renowned
researchers

look at TV
through
children's eyes.

By JOEL LANG



EXPLORING THE WASTELAND

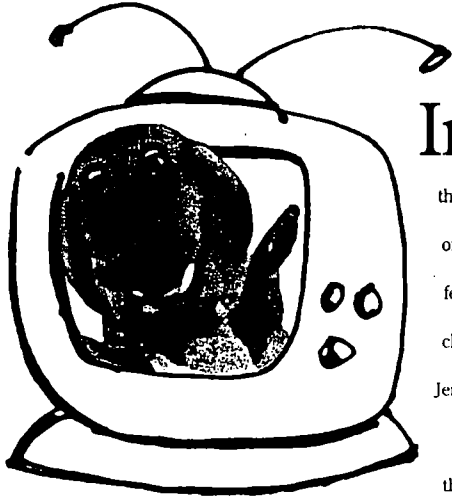
BY JOEL LANG



Jerome and Dorothy Singer believe imagination is an essential human function that can be aided, or stifled, by the television shows children watch.

Photograph by Brad Clift

- You may despise the dinosaur named Barney.
- You may wish Mister Rogers would move a little quicker.
- You may think Sesame Street is good for your kids.
- You need to know, then, about the research of Dorothy and Jerome Singer.



In the course of their quarter-century of research into the effects of television on children, Dorothy and Jerome Singer heard of one inventive father who, like most

parents, worried that his children watched too much, but unlike most, decided to do something about it. The man unplugged the family tube — an already discouraging 12-inch black-and-white set — and rewired it to a generator driven by an exercise bike. Thus, if his children wanted to watch, they had to pedal. Their minds may have had the makings of couch potatoes, but their legs had the makings of Greg LeMond.

The Singers, a husband-and-wife team based at Yale University, recorded the case of the cycling viewers more than 10 years ago in "Teaching Television," a book that argued that if children are to be protected from the worst TV damage, they

ought to be inoculated with knowledge of its tricks.

Given the improvements in home electronics since then, and the compounding temptations of MTV, Nickelodeon and all the rest of cable, it is not surprising that earlier this year a more entrepreneurial parent began marketing a micro-circuit version of the bicycle censor. His device, called the TV Allowance, looks like a calculator, but functions like a bank card. To turn the set on, a child punches in a personal access code. A timer starts ticking against a weekly viewing ration stored in the device's memory.

Certainly the advent of "a parking meter for kids' brains" did not surprise Dorothy Singer one morning last summer when she was handed the New York Times blurb that used that analogy to describe the TV Allowance. (It sells for \$99, and videophobic parents can get more information by dialing 1-800-231-4410). As someone who declares without a qualm that young children ought to be limited to an hour a day, she accepted the clipping with a knowing smile and turned to duplicate it on a table-top copier of the vintage that seems to

Continued on page 9

WASTELAND

Continued from page 7

want to vibrate its way to freedom.

Her office on the ground floor of Sterling-Strathcona Hall in a quiet nook of the Yale campus is low-tech — since it also doubles as the office of the Yale Family Television Research and Consultation Center. There is neither TV nor VCR in sight. As the center's founders and codirectors, Dorothy and Jerome are among the nation's most respected television researchers. At ages 66 and 69 respectively, they have reached the stage where much of their time is spent lecturing or sifting expert wisdom in their field. Early this year, they were the principal authors of a thick report the Corporation for Public Broadcasting made to Congress on the possibility of creating a new channel devoted exclusively to educational programs.

As radical and important as such a channel might be, the report got little notice. The American public may obsess about the country's competitive edge and an epidemic of childhood dumbness (in which TV is a prime suspect), but it cannot conceive of television as anything but commercial, probably because it has never known anything else. The truth — that the airwaves are public property licensed to profit-making broadcasters — sounds strange enough for "Kipley's Believe It or Not." Depending on one's tastes, television might be compared to a national park turned over to carnival operators — where the free rides keep stopping for sales pitches. The Singers are part of a seemingly lunatic fringe who think television is supposed to be good.

The Singers are not crusaders, however, or at least not strident ones. They favor data over argument and still do original research. During the summer, the Singers, with the help of graduate students, turned out a quick "content analysis" of "Barney and Friends," the public television show that is a hit with its pre-school target audience and a teeth-grinding irritant to parents.

The analysis was non-judgmental. All 30 Barney episodes were reviewed for incidents such as vocabulary use, turn taking and emotional expression. In a second phase of the study, the Singers said fall were sampling Barney's young

audience to see if the show is communicating its intended lessons. The show was designed by women who are mothers of young children as well as teachers with advanced degrees in early childhood education.

(For the record, the "Barney" study was funded by Connecticut Public Television, a co-producer of the show. Other of the Singers' studies have been funded by sources as diverse as ABC and the National Science Foundation; one researcher I spoke to said the Singers' reputation is so impeccable that they do not worry about being accused of funding bias.)

Personally, Dorothy loved "Barney"; that is, she loved the kind of show it is, slow-paced, gentle, reassuring, educational.

As for the tubby dinosaur himself, Dorothy had mixed feelings. "I felt in the beginning I didn't know if I could take Barney's laugh," she said. "You know, that 'ha, heh, heh.'" Dorothy made a low chortling sound.

It was a momentary break in her busy, serious demeanor and a fair imitation of what may be Barney's most irritating trait. He hardly utters a sentence that is not punctuated with a kind of gurgling giggle. If TV were true to life, which it definitely is not, you'd expect to see saliva in the corners of Barney's mouth. TV is, however, presumed to be our common culture, so it may help those of older generations (the Mickey Mousers, the Brady Bunchers) who are not acquainted with Barney to be told that his laugh is reminiscent of both Goofy, the Disney bit cartoon player, and Pee Wee Herman, the disgraced Saturday morning host.

On the other hand, while Barney's body may be a violent purple and green, it is also soft and pear-shaped, with prominent haunches. In other words, it is maternal. Barney gives and gets a lot of hugs.

Dorothy said she liked the live child actors who share the classroom stage with Barney very much, and that eventually Barney himself won her over, even his laugh.

"It grew on me," she said. "He gives kids a lot of approval. Adults don't quite understand what children need at that age [pre-school], which is 100 percent positive reinforcement. I'm in favor of Barney's support system and approval."

On the day she spoke of Barney, Dorothy wore canvas sneakers, khaki slacks and a smock-sized blue cotton shirt over a beige T-shirt. The mother of three boys and the grandmother of five girls,

she had a soft aspect herself. But she also has a no-nonsense attitude about work and TV.

She is not inclined to broad, bold McLuhanesque speculations about the medium. "You've got to stay close to the data," she had said earlier. "Every year some book comes out about the poison of television. People do feel there's something happening, but they don't know what's happening."

Dorothy scheduled our interviews by the hour, almost as if she were keeping a therapist's calendar. In fact, Dorothy, who has a doctorate in school psychology, does have a sideline counseling practice that uses play therapy. She sees clients at her home in Woodbridge. From her Yale office, she can look through a tall, leaded-glass window across a grassy courtyard to Kirtland Hall, where her husband has his office on the second floor.

It is surely a coincidence of building assignment, but Jerome, who is a full professor of psychology, works in a space that is the geometric opposite of his wife's. Where hers is narrow and cramped, his is wide and spacious. Nor do the Singers, after 44 years of marriage, look alike. Jerome is stocky and square-faced and generally more easygoing. Dorothy spoke sitting erect in a swivel chair at her desk. Jerome sank into an upholstered chair draped with a gray-blue throw and had to be reminded of the time by a secretary. In their opinions, however, the Singers spoke with one voice.

"What's not to like?" Jerome asked rhetorically about "Barney," a few days after his wife had discussed the subject. "Anyone who thinks that [that Barney is too sweet] doesn't understand the needs of 2, 3- and 4-year-old children. They need security. They need trust."

In the hallway leading to Jerome's office hangs a life-size poster of Barney and Baby Bop autographed "To Jerry — Love, Barney." At the hallway entrance, there is a bulletin board with thumb-tacked articles about the Singers and their books. Together or singly or in collaboration with others, they have produced a couple dozen books and a couple hundred articles. Most of Dorothy's work has been with television, but Jerome estimated only 30 percent of his work has been.

He is noted for his research into daydreams, an evanescent world once considered inaccessible to the methods of social science. When we met in mid-summer for the second time, he had just re-

turned from Holland, where he had addressed the International Psychiatry Association on the subject of "unconscious fantasy and case formulation."

"I could ultimately show you a link with television, but it would take a long time," he said.

Like his wife, Jerome is not inclined to speculate idly, to a reporter anyway, about TV's impact on society. Asked whether he worried about the long-predicted death of the print culture, Jerome chuckled and said, "Well, I wouldn't say I'm not concerned about it."

"I think there is a competition for your consciousness. I know I don't read as much as I used to. I watch TV an hour or two a day, maybe more. I know I wouldn't waste my time on a book that's as bad as what I watch on TV."

He confessed they have two sets, one in their bedroom and one in their study. His favorite shows were the same as his wife's: "Law and Order," a police and court drama, and "Masterpiece Theater." "I'm part of the American intellectual Anglophilia class," he said, self-mockingly.

Earlier, Dorothy had said she'd watch "Masterpiece Theater," "if they come back with the good stuff." She'd also revealed they have basic cable.

Actually, the Singers are print-culture nobility. They met as students in New York City, according to Dorothy, when they noticed at a Madison Avenue music store that each liked Bach. She was listening to a piece called the "Coffee Cantata" and he had picked out "The Well-Tempered Clavier."

They didn't start dating immediately, and once they did they were separated by a long subway ride. Her family lived in the Riverdale section of the Bronx. Her father, a trained chemist who dabbled in fiction and invention, owned and managed real estate with one of her uncles. Jerome's family lived in Brooklyn. His father ran a dress-making business with one of his uncles. The subway trip from one corner of the city to the other took 2 1/2 hours. Dorothy remembers that once Jerome asked for a book to read on the ride home and picked out "The Idiot" by Dostoevsky.

"I thought, 'Is that what he thinks of me? That he's an idiot for coming all this way to visit?'" Dorothy said.

After Dorothy became involved with Jerome she switched her career interest to psychology. As a

classics major at Hunter College, it had been archaeology. Jerome got his doctorate in 1950 from the University of Pennsylvania, but Dorothy did not get hers until 1966, from Columbia.

During the '50s — the decade of normalcy in which television flooded American homes and which, probably inevitably, came to be symbolized by a TV show, "Ozzie and Harriet" — Dorothy divided her time between teaching at Manhattanville College, and taking care of her three young sons.

The glimpse Dorothy gave of their early domestic life is one that probably would cause newer, dual-career parents pangs of guilt and longing. The Singers lived in suburban Ardsley, N.Y. The children were outdoors often, playing with friends, safe. Her oldest child, Jonathan, now 40, was school-aged before the family got its first TV. Their favorite characters were Spin and Marty, who were featured in a serial that ran as part of the Mickey Mouse Club show. Dorothy, who was in effect a professionally trained parent, read to them a lot and made sure they had the right kind of toys. Basic building blocks are still probably the best toy, she said. Her sons played with them until adolescence, ending with the construction of space stations.

Jonathan became a freelance writer; Bruce, a scriptwriter (he and his mother recently shared a Christopher Award for a show they did about Prudence Crandall) and Jefferson, a psychology professor who writes much. "That's what they saw us doing, was writing," Dorothy said.

But for parenting models, Dorothy and Jerome both cite their own mothers. They were the sort who faithfully read stories, exposed their children to the arts and allowed them free-association toys.

In the closing pages of one of their most recent books, "The House of Make Believe" (Harvard University Press, 1990), the Singers depart from academic rigor to pay tribute to their mothers.

"Our own mothers, who by world standards have lived rather ordinary lives, were both unusually adept at finding interesting things for their children to do on rainy summer days — parades with kitchen pot drums or pretend picnics on the rug. We remember."

The book, which opens and closes with a poem by Rilke, another of the Singers' shared affinities, takes its title from a Frost

Continued on next page

NORTHEAST / October 24, 1993

NORTHEAST / October 24, 1993 15

Joel Lang is a staff writer for Northeast. He profiled Harry and Helen Gray on Sept. 12.

poem:

*First there's the children's
house of make-believe.
Some shattered dishes under-
neath a pine.*

*The playthings in the play-
house of the children.
Weep for what little things
could make them glad.*

Of minor literary importance, the poem, with its poignant repetition of "playthings" and "play-house," has major significance in the context of the Singers' work. To adults, child's play is trivial and fragile. Only a sentimentalist might "weep" for their worthless toys.

However, how many caring parents now silently weep (or scream out loud) when they see their children sitting together toyless for hours in front of the television? Broken dishes would enrich their world. To the Singers, play is not trivial. The subtitle of their book, which Jerome said is one of their most meaningful collaborations, is "Children's Play and the Developing Imagination."

What the Singers mean by imagination is not what most people might think. It is not a frivolity; not a luxurious accessory of personality for children of the favored classes. It is an essential human function.

In their book, the Singers say that they cannot prove that children whose play emphasizes imagination become more successful adults. But that is their belief.

"We propose that such play has particular adaptive features," they write. "When children engage in symbolic games they are practicing mental skills that will later stand them in good stead, just as practice in walking, balancing or swimming aids the development of motor skills."

When children drape a bedspread over chairs and people their house with stuffed animals, or when they build a space station from blocks, they are not escaping into fantasy; nor, on the other extreme, are they merely rehearsing for real life, the Singers contend. What they are doing is learning how to distinguish the fantastic from the real, how to speculate about various scenarios and choose between them, how to distinguish themselves from others, how to concentrate. In other words, they are learning how to think in what some psychologists

call a "narrative mode." They are creating stories or myths that help them understand their world.

This mode of thought is not entirely rational, nor is it confined to children. Adults use it too, though they may describe it as weighing options and delude themselves about their logic.

If imaginative play is as important to human development as the Singers believe, then the implications of television are enormous. Children now watch an average two to three hours a day, depending on the season, and when they are watching they are self-evidently not doing something else. What's more, most television programs are themselves "stories," complete with image and sound (but not smell, taste or sensation) that the viewer cannot resist absorbing. Do these stories aid imagination or stifle it? Do children with active imaginations behave differently from children with less-active imaginations?

These are questions the Singers have returned to again and again in their research. The questioning began in 1972, when a group of preschoolers they were observing seemed to have a positive reaction to a televised version of "Peter Pan." In the days after the show, the children dressed like characters from Never Land, played in imitation of them — the pirates as well as Peter and Wendy — and created their own variations of the story.

"We are convinced that television pervades the consciousness of children," the Singers write in the one chapter on television in "The House of Make Believe." "It is manifest in the clothes they wear, the toys and games they play, the characters with whom they identify, and the cereals and candy they eat."

Like many of the discoveries of social science, this one confirms what most people already presume. But the Singers, like other researchers, go beyond generalities. All shows are not the same. Neither are all children. Researchers ask how particular kinds of shows affect particular kinds of children.

This is the reason the Singers were so eager to take a close look at "Barney." Its audience is at the vulnerable stage when imaginative powers begin to form. From previous studies, they already knew what kind of show "Barney" ought to be.

In the late 1970s, the Singers, in collaboration with two other re-

searchers, did a study that was reported in a scholarly article titled, "Differential Effects of Television Programming on Preschoolers' Cognition, Imagination and Play."

It compared the reactions of three groups of children to three kinds of shows and it would help make the Singers mildly notorious. The shows were a series of nature programs, used as a control, and two of the most successful children's shows in television history: "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" and "Sesame Street."

Making the necessary statistical adjustments for socioeconomic status, IQ and so forth, the researchers found that "Mister

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Rogers" tended to strengthen the imaginative abilities of children, especially those who at the start of the study were judged to be less imaginative. "Sesame Street" had no such positive effect.

In other studies, the Singers would find that heavy viewers of "Sesame Street" (and some children watched two or even three installments a day) also tended to become more aggressive; that is, impulsive, boisterous, lacking concentration.

The key difference between the two shows was one of style: "Sesame Street" is almost hyper-TV; more like a series of commercials. It has short scenes, quick cuts, much motion, multiple story lines. In fact, cartoons and frenzied game shows tend to elicit the same aggressive reaction in heavy viewers as does "Sesame Street."

"Mister Rogers," on the other hand, is almost anti-TV. It moves and speaks as slowly as the host

himself. A single scene might last five minutes or more, and a whole show might be devoted to a single theme.

Some adults might find Mister Rogers almost as cloying as Barney, but personality aside, the slower pace is better matched to the interpretive powers of the children it is aimed at, the Singers believe. Young children process information (information meaning all stimuli, not just numbers or letters) much more slowly than adults.

Any parent who has read the same story over and over to a child might have an inkling of just how slowly. The child does not love the story so much as think it endlessly fascinating. Each repetition is, in effect, a new experience because the child absorbs more information each time. Because Mister Rogers goes slower, children extract more from it.

As the Singers' study stated it, "The format of Mister Rogers seems to have special advantages in facilitating comprehension and in building up constructive, imaginative play in children who are initially less imaginative." The language may read like a public-affairs-program script guaranteed to get zero ratings, but the finding became permanently associated with them. It brought them close to Fred Rogers, with whom they've worked over the years.

At Family Communications Inc. in Pittsburgh, a company built around Roger's talents, one of his two public relations agents said his busy schedule made a live interview difficult. But she forwarded his warm endorsement of the Singers.

"It's not easy for adults to reach into their own childhood memories and see the world through a child's eyes, but that is what the Singers have encouraged television producers and purveyors to do," the TV star, who went to divinity school, wrote.

"Over the years, they have certainly been ambassadors for our Neighborhood. They've helped many people understand why our deliberate pace, our encouragement of wonder and thoughtfulness, and our emphasis on imaginative play can be helpful for young children."

It was not necessary to call the Children's Television Workshop for an equal time response from the producers of "Sesame Street." It has plenty of expert defenders. Ask others involved in children's television issues about the Singers, sooner or later they will say something like, "Well, you know what

they say about "Sesame Street," don't you?"

Peggy Charren, who became one of the loudest voices demanding better children's programming after she founded Action for Children's Television 13 years ago, said she disagrees, strongly, with the Singers about "Sesame Street."

"I think the people who attack 'Sesame Street' for being too fast... have an unrealistic view of television in children's lives," Charren said.

Charren said she personally dislikes "Barney," describing it variously as saccharine, nauseating and simple-minded. But she said that doesn't mean it's a bad show for children. One of her main causes has been to get more variety for children on TV.

Except for the "Sesame Street" issue, and implying that no amount of academic research would make television reform itself, Charren spoke respectfully of the Singers. Apparently worried she might have sounded too critical of them, she called back several days later to alert me that the Singers had been featured in a special children's TV issue of "Broadcasting and Cable," the weekly magazine that she described as the Bible of the broadcast industry. Their inclusion reflects the Singers' prominence, she said.

"I don't feel negative about the Singers. I feel good about the Singers. It's just that I'm an activist and they're researchers."

Researchers, however, also think the Singers may be too alarmist about "Sesame Street."

"They represent a particular point of view; they have been particularly critical of some of the effects of television's rapid pace... its bombarding the senses," said Aletha Huston, a professor of human development at the University of Kansas whom the Singers themselves had named as a nationally respected researcher.

Like Charren, Huston said children's shows needn't be all the same style. And just as Charren scoffed at people who "feel your brain gets addled when you watch too much TV," Huston said the medium itself is neutral.

"It matters a lot what you do with it," Huston said. "Inherently it doesn't have positive or negative effects."

In one way, the schism over "Barney" and "Sesame Street" is not so dire as it might appear. Dorothy even allowed that "Sesame Street," taken by itself

Continued on page 15

WASTELAND

Continued from page 10

and watched in moderation, was harmless. But she wished it were better, given its popularity and resources and the wasteland of commercial TV. Both "Barney" and "Sesame Street" at least intend well.

In another way, however, the differences between "Barney" and "Sesame Street" are emblematic of a concern common to researchers and parents. Children do not confine their viewing to the quality programming public television boasts of so insistently. Children average 23 hours a week in front of the tube, and sometimes much more. If the fast-paced, jerky style of "Sesame Street" is more typical of most TV programs, what then must be the overall impact of TV?

The question of whether, and in what ways, TV is "bad" is as old and as pervasive as the medium itself. As rapidly as sets began to en-

ter living rooms after World War II, people began to worry that TV was too violent, too commercial, too unreal, too dumb. Similar fears accompany every new mass technology. Parents and other guardians of the status quo worried about radio (whose heyday, it turned out, lasted 20 years, and whose programs now inspire only nostalgia), about movies, about comic books. According to historians, the printing press itself was seen as threatening social chaos, since it made knowledge cheap and abundant for the masses.

But television is different, or at least seems to be. Usually the beginning of the TV era is dated at 1946. The 50th anniversary is almost here, yet fear of the medium seems to be tuned to a perpetual premiere.

Last summer Sen. Paul Simon led a chorus in warning networks that they better get serious about reducing prime-time violence, or violence of a regulatory sort might be done to them. The previous

winter the FCC said, sorry, but the animated inanity of Saturday morning cartoons really didn't meet the educational standards federal rules require of children's programming. And the vaguest, most troubling fear — gunfights, blue language, cartoons aside — is that TV is, in effect, destroying children's minds and adult culture.

Such sea-change predictions recall Marshall McLuhan, who, if he had been a TV star instead of a writer of social philosophy, might be in rerun on cable today and more relevant to the current TV debate. As it is, even researchers don't have much use for McLuhan. He was, after all, an English professor who indulged in reckless theory and who betrayed his class (the academic priesthood) by predicting, gleefully, that television would end the tyranny of the printed word. McLuhan argued that watching television provided a fuller sensory experience than reading a book. Television is therefore a "cool" medium, according to

McLuhan, whereas books are "hot."

His most memorable phrase, "the medium is the message," meant that the way information is conveyed is more important than the information itself. Upon his death in 1980, his front-page obituary in the *New York Times* said: "McLuhan believed that television ... has a profound impact on children not because of what is on it, but because of what is in it. Its mosaic pattern of dots of light, its lack of detail, its motion and sound, and the fact that the light comes at the viewer — all these make television watching an aural and tactile experience as well as a visual one ... and far more deeply involving than reading a book."

It is interesting that even McLuhan, who was described as a "guru" and "unmanned" space probe from the future, chose to discuss TV in terms of children. His dismissal of print as an inferior medium must have been very threatening to those who derive

power from books.

In hindsight, however, it appears McLuhan got some things right. He predicted the advent of the electronic "global village," for instance. Anyone who doubts TV's global impact need only be reminded that "information" about Western wealth beamed behind the Iron Curtain is said to have contributed to the sudden collapse of the Soviet empire, or that TV is now said to be transforming rural China. More basically, McLuhan perceived TV as bringing a sort of climatic change to the human experience.

According to his *Times* obit, McLuhan once told an interviewer: "By knowing how technology shapes our environment, we can transcend its absolute power. ... if we can understand its components, we can turn it off any time we choose."

Incidentally, McLuhan's advice anticipated the Singers' TV-view-

Continued on page 17

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WASTELAND

(Continued from page 15)

ing curriculum, now used in some Connecticut schools. It attempts to teach children such things as how to recognize commercials and various kinds of programs, that most shows are creations, that most people on TV are actors. Their advice to parents is that children should at least be guided to watch specific programs, rather than allowed to watch randomly. The most important thing a parent can do is watch with a child. "When you talk, even the worst show can be meaningful," Dorothy said.

George Gerbner, another prominent researcher whose opinion about the Singers was sought, predicted that curriculums like theirs will one day be as standard in schools as English and history. Gerbner, dean emeritus at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications, is known for his broad analysis of how TV depicts the sexes, and for counting episodes of violence. Both are drastically at odds with reality.

One of Gerbner's beliefs, which Jerome said he agreed with com-

pletely, is that TV violence is not so much popular as it is "marketable."

"It's cheap, it travels well," said Gerbner, giving a fresh twist to the truism that TV appeals to the lowest common denominator. He means that violent shows (and probably any show that emphasizes action, or sex) can be watched by a wide variety of audiences, each of which separately might prefer something else. Thus, TV shows are designed to be like supermarket tomatoes: durable, superficially appetizing, but lacking real taste. The more a show depends on plot and dialogue the more it becomes like a fresh, native tomato: perishable and limited to a small market.

Gerbner and other researchers now speak of the environment created by television, just as McLuhan did. And as with other environments, such as that of nature, or the man-made one of cities, we have difficulty seeing the television environment as a whole, never mind understanding its particular effects.

The isolated question of whether TV promotes violence is a daunting one that begins with defining violence. Is it explicit

episodes of violence of the sort that might lead to imitation in real life? Or is it the generally rapid, motion-filled style of TV that disposes viewers to similarly uncontrolled behavior? How can the influence of TV, if it is an influence, be separated from factors such as one's upbringing?

The Singers, among many other researchers, have sought answers to these questions for many years. In reporting a major study on aggression they did more than a decade ago, the Singers cited even earlier studies gathered for a report to the Surgeon General. Many of the studies showed a "positive correlation," as scientists wary of claiming cause and effect like to say, between TV and violence.

In their own study, the Singers followed 200 New Haven preschoolers over the course of a year in which parents were asked to keep a log of their children's viewing habits and trained observers evaluated the children during play periods at nursery school or day care.

The results suggested that certain kinds of shows did make some children more aggressive. But the

modest increase was not just linked to action shows of the era, such as "Battlestar Galactica" or "The Incredible Hulk." There was also a link with "high arousal" programs such as games shows and, yes, "Sesame Street."

Violence, of course, is not confined to TV. As a species, people, especially the male sex, are violent. Comic books often are violent. Fairy tales often are very violent — imagine being baked in an oven by a hag (Hansel and Gretel) or eaten alive (Little Red Riding Hood). But TV is always there, and with channel surfing, children can turn it into a perpetual Punch and Judy show.

In the debate over TV violence, as in the debate over whether rap music encourages violence, those most concerned might be dismissed as vaguely conservative or overly frightened by a certain sort of parent.

Such middle-class, college-educated parents are more likely to worry about whether their children will get into Yale or UConn, rather than whether they will wind up in jail. They might greet with a complacent nod Jerome Singer's acknowledgment, in an article titled "The Power and Limitations of Television," that probably only the minority of children already disposed to aggressiveness respond to TV violence. But in that article, as he and his wife have in their work with imagination, Singer makes the case that TV's "arousal" patterns also have implications for learning.

In his "Power and Limitations" article, Jerome notes that vision and hearing are the most highly developed human senses. We respond almost involuntarily to sights and sounds. TV is constantly shifting sight and sound, which explains why it is not so much mesmerizing as un-ignorable. It insists on attention.

But once it has that attention, what does it do with it? It may overwhelm the faculties of a young child. For older children and adults, television, for all its sound and fury is peculiarly numbing. Its fast stories, complete with picture and speech, neither permit reflection nor require it.

Jerome likens the television viewer to the monkey from a famous experiment of behavioral science. The monkey's brain was altered to limit its ability to filter out stimuli, so that quickly presented with one grape after another, the monkey keeps taking new grapes, but manages to eat none.

"The rapid shifts of focus, the quick-30-second commercial, and

the speed of dialogue hold our attention all too well," Jerome writes. "The set trains us to merely watch it." The italics are his.

Contrary to McLuhan's idea that TV is a fuller experience, Jerome suggests that reading is the "cooler" medium. Reading engages us more because we have to decipher its printed symbols and assemble a full picture in our minds. Jerome says a book is more "information deep" than television. Reading, however, is work and requires practice.

In person, the Singers do not speak as though television means the death of civilization. If there is a single word to describe the Singers' attitude toward TV, it would be that they are "sane."

When I brought up Neil Postman as an example of the sort of authority who is seen as predicting an electronic apocalypse, Jerome said, "It's hard to disagree with him. But so what? You're kidding yourself [if you think you can get rid of TV]. People in Uganda and Indochina are desperate for TV."

The Singers' attitude is that TV is here; we've got to use it to its best advantage. In fact, TV might be described as democratic. TV has what George Gerbner is credited with labeling as a "mainstreaming effect": beneficial to some, harmful to others. Gerbner says a large portion of TV's mass audience was excluded from print culture to start with.

Last year, Dorothy referred to Gerbner and many other researchers in a paper she presented in Germany at a scholarly gathering aptly called, "On Gutenberg's Shoulders: the Second International Media Ecology Conference." Her paper reviewed decades of research into the effects of television on children's imagination and their ability to read.

Among the studies she cited was a famous one done in 1986 of children in three small Canadian towns, one of which somehow had just begun to get TV. In "Notel," as the town was called, reading scores quickly began to drop for children in lower grades after the introduction of TV. Older children, who already had passed beyond the vulnerable stages when they learn to read, seemed immune.

An enormous study done in the 1980s of 500,000 Californian sixth- and 12th-graders found that, in general, the more television they watched the less well they read. But TV seemed to improve reading scores for children who spoke

Continued on next page

NORTHEAST/October 24, 1993 17

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Continued from previous page

limited English to begin with. The statistically strongest finding of the study was that children from the wealthiest socioeconomic backgrounds suffered the sharpest drop in test scores.

In one of their own studies that followed 84 pre-school children for five years, the Singers found that heavy viewing weakened reading scores of middle-class children, while scores were stronger for heavy viewers from more deprived backgrounds.

Last middle-class parents panic, however, they should know that yet another study cited in Dorothy's paper — she described it as a "meta-analysis of the correlational literature" — found that light viewing of fewer than 10 hours a week appeared to be actually beneficial to most children's reading.

As a medium, television has not changed much since the Singers began their research. People watch about the same, sometimes appalling, amount. There are more channels because of cable, but as subscribers soon learn a lot of the programming is re-runs. What has changed is that TV is no longer synonymous with the tube. Now we stare at video games, rented movies and computer programs.

In the last year, the Singers have been conducting research at the Beecher Road School in Woodbridge, their town of residence. They are interested in this elementary school with a middle-class student body because, as Dorothy said, "This is how schools are going to look in the future."

The Beecher Road School is wired. With an enrollment of 750, it has 230 computers, most of them new Macintoshes, that are used in most parts of the curriculum. In the initial phase of their study, which resumes this fall, the Singers surveyed students' total media consumption: radio, tape players, VCR, and video games, as well as books, television and computer.

The survey showed that children spent more hours with television than all other media combined, but even the nearly 13 hours weekly average for TV struck the Singers as suspiciously low.

The preliminary data have not been surprising. Kids who used computers more — most programs still being books transferred to software — tended to do better in school. Aggressive kids — kids who tend to watch more TV — did less well. Interestingly, video games was the only new media associated with lower reading scores.

It was less scientific than a Nielsen rating, but one discovery the Singers noted as disturbing was that hardly any of the Beecher students picked public TV shows as their favorite.

"Full House" got the most votes, 22. Dorothy indicated she regards it as a decent family sitcom. She was more troubled that two new cartoons, "Beavis and Butt-head" (7 votes) and "Ren & Stimpy" (4 votes), were among the most popular shows.

"Ren & Stimpy" is in Dorothy's appraisal, "ugh, disgusting." "Beavis and Butt-head," who appear on MTV, are virtually pre-verbal, or maybe post-verbal is more accurate. According to a recent article in *Rolling Stone* welcoming their arrival, butts are a favorite topic of

conversation.

In their interviews and in their writings, the Singers have little good to say about cartoons. Indeed, they impressed me as tending toward the moralistic. When I asked Dorothy whether she and her husband felt frustrated that researchers seemed to have so little influence on commercial TV, she mentioned small victories, such as characters being shown buckling auto seat belts and Henry "The Fonz" Winkler taking out a library card on "Happy Days."

It is ostrichlike blindness, however, to deny, as Dorothy said, that TV's "modeling behavior is so powerful." Extreme and tragic evidence of that power was reported earlier this month in Moraine, Ohio, where a 5-year-old boy started a fire that killed his sister after watching a TV show that made burning things look like fun. The show was "Beavis and Butt-head." A spokeswoman for MTV, on which "Beavis and Butt-head" appears, promised a re-examination of the show.

No matter whether we look at the psychological effects of the medium or at the social messages of its programming, we ought to pay more attention to what's on — and watch less. That is the contradictory lesson of the Singers' research.

"I think television has had the potential to create a new world for us," Dorothy said. "We just haven't had the programming. TV is like this great big hole and we keep throwing things into it. You have the obligatory car chase, the obligatory bed scene. It's graphic; you don't even need the words."

In one of our last conversations, I asked Dorothy what research project she might undertake if someone gave her \$1 million, no strings attached. I expected it would be connected with television, but I should not have been surprised that it wasn't.

"It would be to do with the imagination," Dorothy said. "Probably my husband would want to do the same thing. Where does the imagination come from? Why is one child filled with imagination and one not?"

Dorothy was speaking of imagination as an essential human capacity, which in a few of us can lead to genius, or to madness. Research also shows that when ordinary children are asked to express their imaginations in school, the stories they make up come more and more from television. ■

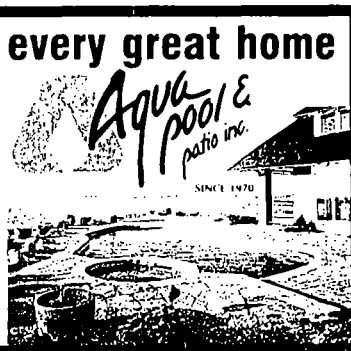
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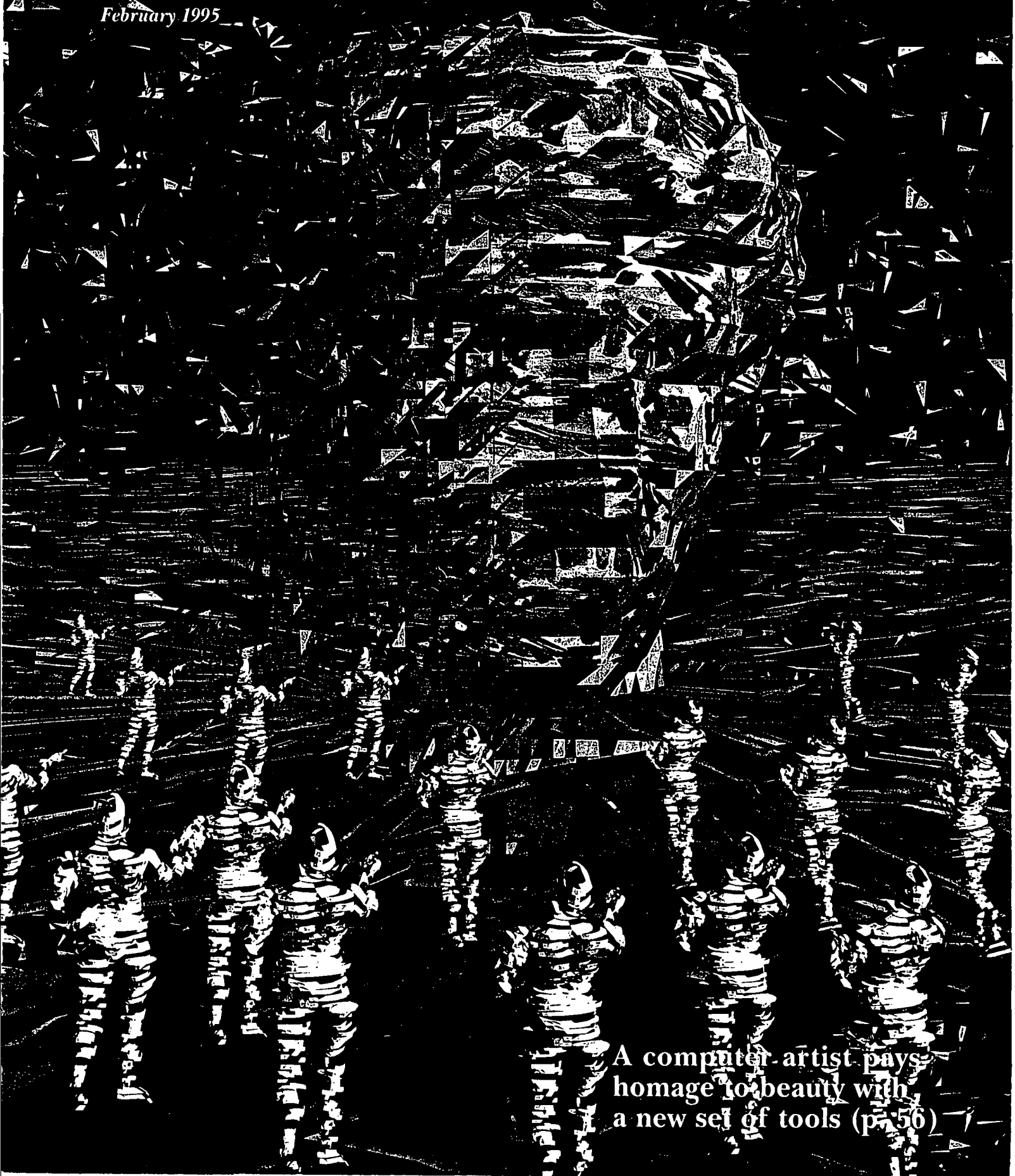
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A computer artist pays
homage to beauty with
a new set of tools (p. 56)

Ready, set, read— 20 minutes each day is all you'll need

As the author of the best-selling Read-Aloud Handbook, Jim Trelease believes making time for books creates a lifetime love of reading

Jim Trelease is the first to admit that he's superfluous. "Imagine! I give 150 programs a year throughout North America. People pay me *full-time* to come into their communities and tell them that they should read aloud to their children!" He shakes his head with mock incredulity. Mostly young parents and teachers, the members of his audience giggle nervously. They have resisted the temptation to stay home on this Friday evening despite rainy weather and the draw of the Olympic women's figure skating finals. And this is what they get in appreciation? "That's like someone being paid full-time to go around the country and tell people, When you put your child to bed at night, the pillow—it goes *under* his head, not *over* his head!"

Your grandparents may have practiced it, children's librarians have been doing it all along, common sense makes it fairly plain, and thousands of academic studies have proven its worth, but reading to children on a daily basis seems as foreign to most parents and teachers of the 1990s as, well, sleeping beneath the pillow. To Trelease, it's the best-kept secret in education today.

"Most people don't believe me when I tell them that reading aloud is the single most important factor in reading success," Trelease says, settling himself on a stool he has positioned just feet from the first row of the elementary school auditorium in St. Helena, California, a town of 5,000 in the heart of the Napa Valley. "They don't believe me for three reasons: One, it's simple. Two, it's free. And three, the child enjoys it. Believe me, if this stuff required a master's degree and a \$149 ma-

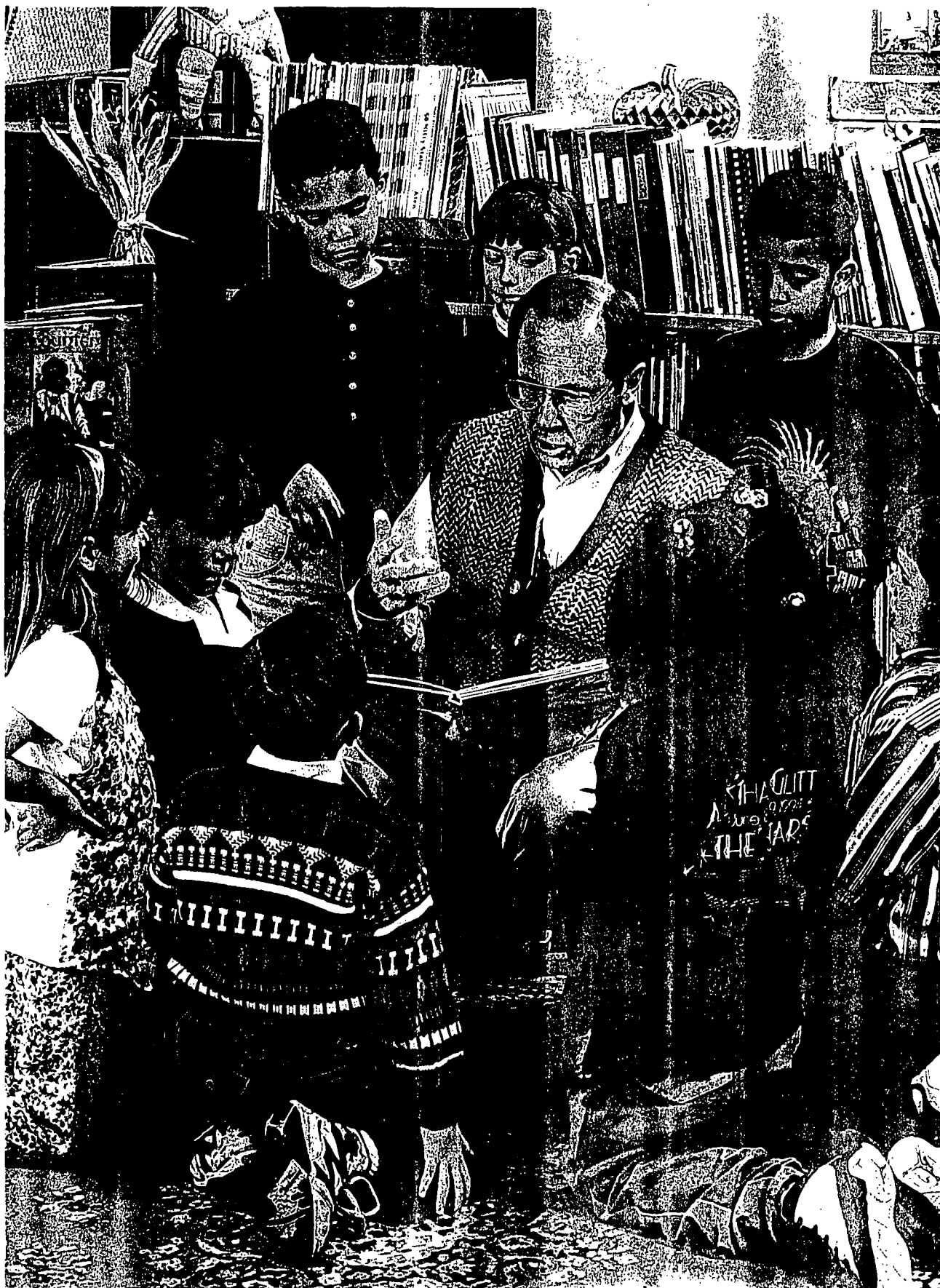
chine, we'd have it in half the homes of America. And if kids hated it, we'd have it in every classroom! But if it's simple and free, how much good can the thing be?"

Of course Trelease is eager to explain how much good the thing can be. He has devoted the past 15 years to just that. To many parents and educators who don't recognize his name at first, a reference to "the read-aloud guy" can often jog a memory. That has been his identity since 1979 when he self-published a 30-page booklet called *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, half of it "whys" and "hows," the other half an annotated bibliography of recommended titles. Producing it cost \$600—the family's summer vacation money. He gave it to friends and neighbors in Springfield, Massachusetts, and sold it to a few bookstores. Then Penguin picked up his title and published it. But *The Read-Aloud Handbook* probably would have retired after a brief and peaceful life had not a copy found its way into the hands of an expectant mother who sent it to a popular syndicated newspaper columnist. Abigail Van Buren loved it. After she sang its praises in print, *The Read-Aloud Handbook* suddenly appeared on the *New York Times* best-seller list, where it remained for 17 weeks. "We call her 'Dear, dear Abby' in our household," Trelease jokes.

More than a million copies later, *The Read-Aloud Handbook* will be issued in a fourth edition in September, with 300-plus pages that include the "Treasury of Read-Alouds" listing 1,500 books. It now has companions in two anthologies Trelease has edited, *Hey! Listen to This* (for young children) and *Read All About It!* (for preteens and teens). Trelease is booked 18 months in advance as a speaker, and for those unable to see him in person he offers audio and video tapes. All to persuade people of something they may not want to hear: no matter how busy they are, the most important thing they can do for a child, next to hugging him, is to read to him. And, Trelease adds, after that comes severely curtailing time spent in front of the TV.

Trelease backs up his pitch with anecdotes and studies. He lifts a hefty document that he calls one of the most seminal papers in the history of education research. It is *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, the report of a commission funded in 1983 by the U.S. Department of Education to review 20 years of reading research and provide recommendations for improving the teaching and learning of reading. Chaired by Richard Anderson, director of the Center for the Study of Reading at the University of Illinois, the Commission on Reading published its results two years later. The first conclusion: "The single most important activity for building the

Sharing a favorite title with an attentive audience, Trelease holds story hour for group of second-graders.



Photographs by Richard Howard

knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children." In the decade since the publication of *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, Richard Anderson believes, the evidence has continued to mount.

Study after study from reading researchers confirms a litany of benefits: reading to children builds vocabulary and background knowledge and establishes the reading-writing connection; it exposes children to a wealth of experiences outside their own; it stimulates imaginations, stretches attention spans, nourishes emotional development, encourages compassion, reshapes negative attitudes to positive ones; and it introduces textures and nuances of the English language rarely heard on TV sitcoms. But for all that, it does even more. Reading aloud is, in essence, an advertisement for learning to read, a process that can otherwise be tedious, frustrating or even threatening.

Trelease laments that elementary school students are too often conditioned to associate reading with pain in the form of a thousand worksheets a year, on average, even though no study has ever shown a correlation between reading ability and how many worksheets a child completes. "We have concentrated so hard on teaching children *how* to read, that we have forgotten to teach them to *want* to read. As a result, we have created a nation of *schooltime* readers, not *lifetime* readers."

It's hard not to gulp when he says that 90 percent of fifth-graders devote less than 1 percent of their free time to reading, although they spend 33 percent of their free time watching television. By the time they become high school seniors, he predicts, more than 95 percent of them will be unable to comprehend the *New York Times*, while 63 percent will not even read at the level of the tabloid papers. And if their parents' habits can predict their own futures, Trelease points out that 60 percent of U.S. homes did not buy a single book in 1991, and it's no better with newspaper consumption: the United States places 19th in per capita newspaper circulation among the top 20 industrialized nations.

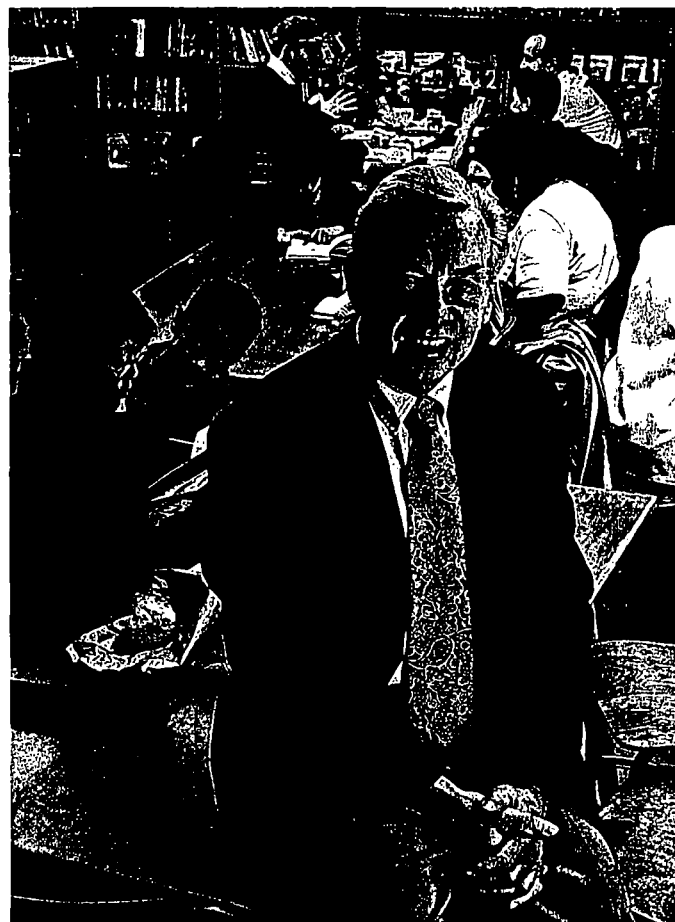
Reading for the love of it

For all his command of studies and statistics, the world's leading popularizer of reading research found his calling not because it spoke to his intellect, but because it nurtured his emotions. When their two children were young, Trelease and his wife Susan fed them as many books as meals, relishing the rich bonds that reading cultivated within the family. "I didn't know a thing about vocabulary development and attention span," he confesses. "I read to my kids because my father had read to me. I just wanted Elizabeth and Jamie to have the good feelings I had had."

He grew up in the 1940s with two brothers in a two-bedroom garden apartment in Union, New Jersey. The



As a school day ends, shop teacher Michael Whitman regales his homeroom class with a Nancy Drew escapade.





Here at Bigelow, a Newton, Massachusetts, middle school, the principal, a Trelease fan, instituted read-alouds.

Ken Sakamoto



Inspired by Trelease, Lynne Waihee, wife of Hawaii's governor, heads up the statewide "Read to Me" campaign.

Trelease admirer Arthur Tannenbaum has brought hundreds of volunteer readers to New York City schools.

Depression was still a fresh memory. It had kept his parents from attending college. "We didn't own a car until I was in fifth grade or a house until I was in seventh," Trelease recalls. "But for as long as I can remember, we subscribed to several magazines and two daily newspapers, and we had an encyclopedia that I pored over from front to back before I could read a word." He remembers scarcely a day of childhood when his father didn't read aloud to him. The daily routine usually included *Li'l Abner*, along with the "Bedtime Stories" column, featuring Uncle Wiggly, from the *Newark Evening News*. Then father and son studied the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post*—an image Norman Rockwell might well have painted—before Dad turned to the serialization inside and his son settled back to listen.

Into the classroom: a new career

After graduating from the University of Massachusetts, where he was a sportswriter for the college newspaper and a play-by-play sportscaster for the radio station, Trelease went to work as a reporter and cartoonist in nearby Springfield. He probably would have lived out his working life as a journalist had it not been for a request he had trouble turning down. In 1967 a fourth-grade teacher refused to take "no" for an answer when she invited him to her classroom to talk about his career. He had so much fun that he was soon making 40 unpaid school visits a year. On his way out the door of one classroom, he spotted *The Bears' House* by Marilyn Sachs, a novel he had just read to his daughter.

"I put down my briefcase and drawings, and I went back and said, 'Who's reading this?' Three girls sheepishly raised their hands. So I asked them, 'Don't you just love it?' For the next 45 minutes I just sat on the desk as we talked about *The Bears' House* and other books." In a thank-you note, the teacher told him that as soon as he had finally left, every child in the class was ready to break down the doors to get to the library.

"That bothered me," Trelease says. "It bothered me that they weren't ready to break down the doors to get to the library every day. From then on, I always saved time to ask the class what they had read lately. And as the years went on, I began to see that the kids were reading less and less, *except* in the classes where the teachers read aloud to the class. I began to wonder if there was a connection between how much you read to children and how much they wanted to read to themselves."

When he pursued his hunch in the professional reading journals, he found a wealth of research to support it. He was off and running—with reading. He tried pressing neighbors, relatives and colleagues at the paper to read to their children, but hardly anyone showed interest. "They all thought that reading aloud was something you did when the kid wouldn't go to sleep, and televi-



In 150 appearances a year, Trelease offers this message: a child needs, and deserves, someone to read to him.

sion worked just as well. Maybe that was because they were never read to as children."

In St. Helena, Trelease invokes a skeptical father he once met in Alabama. "Excuse me, sir. Now this I just don't understand." Trelease impersonates the man and his buzzy, Ross Perot twang. "You say I should read to my son. But my son is in the fourth grade, and I'm mighty proud to say he's in the top reading group! Now, why should you read to a child who already knows how to read? Why doesn't *he* just read *his* books, and *I'll* read *my* books, and we'll both be happy?"

To answer the question, Trelease rotates his body 90 degrees and returns to his undoctored New Jersey accent. "You say your son is reading at a fourth-grade level? Wonderful! But tell me: What's his *listening* level?"

Listening level? Now that's as new to the St. Helenans as it was to the man in Alabama. "You see," Trelease explains, "listening comprehension comes before reading comprehension, and it's usually two to three years ahead. A child reading on a fourth-grade level may be able to listen to books written on a sixth-grade level. It is the child's listening vocabulary that feeds his reading vocabulary." To illustrate, Trelease scoops up a book from a nearby table and reads the opening paragraph from Roald Dahl's *The Enormous Crocodile*.

"In the biggest brownest muddiest river in Africa, two crocodiles lay with their heads just above the water. One of the crocodiles was enormous. The other was not so big.' Now let's suppose a child does not know the word 'enormous.' Which is going to be more effective? Hearing the word in the context of a story, or seeing it isolated from meaning on a flash card? And remember, if a child has never heard the word 'enormous,' he'll never say the word 'enormous.' And if he's never heard it or said it, it's going to be pretty difficult when the time comes to read it."

Parents ask him when to start reading aloud even more often than they ask when to stop. Characteristically, he answers with a question. "When did you start talking to your child? Did you wait until she was 18 months old? Of course not. You started talking to her on the day she was born. If a child is old enough to talk to, the child is old enough to read to."

Upon the birth of their daughter, Marcia and Mark Thomas received *The Read-Aloud Handbook* as a gift. Previously, they hadn't considered reading to a baby, but they had a special reason for wanting to promote Jennifer's intellectual development: she was born with Down's syndrome. "We figured it couldn't hurt," says Marcia Thomas, "so we put her on a diet of ten books a day." As an infant, Jennifer required surgery and spent seven weeks in the hospital. For the times when her parents couldn't be present, they left recorded books and a tape recorder for the nurses to play. By age 2, Jennifer brought books to her parents and regularly sat still for an hour at



Marcia and Mark Thomas began reading to daughter Jennifer when she was only weeks old. She's now among the top readers in her fourth-grade class.

a time as they were being read. By age 5, she was reading on her own and carting books around by the bagful.

Now a 10-year-old in a regular fourth-grade class in Concord, Massachusetts, Jennifer Thomas (above) is a voracious reader with a vocabulary her teacher describes as "phenomenal." She is sometimes the only one in the class to comprehend a difficult passage. "We believe it has all come from reading to her as a little baby, and then as a young child," says her mother. "We tell everyone who has a baby that they can't read too early or too much."

As soon as Tracy and Geoff Worley heard Jim Trelease speak at a school near their home in Tustin, California, they changed their family's routine. "He left a huge impact on us," recalls Tracy. "We rethought everything that was important in our lives. Nothing got in the way of my husband's reading to our daughter and son." Nothing but tragedy. Two and a half years later, the children lost their father to cancer. "Memories of their father reading to them, and the nurturing closeness that it built, will stay with them for the rest of their lives. They still talk about the books Daddy read, and how he read them."

Lest there be any doubt about the stakes involved, Trelease proffers a bold claim. Reading, he tells his audience, is the single most important social factor in American life today. "The more you read, the more you know. The more you know, the smarter you grow. The smarter you grow, the longer you stay in school. The

longer you stay in school, the more money you earn. The more you earn, the better your children will do in school, and the longer you will live. So if you hook a child with reading, you influence not only his future health and financial circumstances but also those of the next generation! On the other hand, the less you read, the less you know. The less you know, the sooner you drop out of school. The sooner you drop out, the more likely you are to be poor, *and* the greater your chances of going to jail. Eighty-two percent of prison inmates are school dropouts, and 60 percent are illiterate."

By now, Trelease's audience is at rapt attention. The televised Olympics are very far away. He minces no words, subscribing instead to the philosophy that a little bit of guilt can go a long way.

"I know what you're thinking. There are only 24 hours in a day. It's true. But who ever told you that parenting was going to be a time-saving activity?"

Trelease is walking about now, gesturing in broad strokes to nobody in particular. "You, sir, had the time to watch your favorite ball team win or lose yesterday. You, ma'am, had the time to go to the mall yesterday, maybe two malls. You had the time to run to the corner store to play that lottery ticket, get cigarettes, rent a video. You had the time to talk to your sister on the phone for 35 minutes, probably about nothing. You had the time to chase dust balls under the couch, time to do the dishes. But you didn't have time to read to your child? I can tell you this unequivocally: 20 years from now there'll be twice as many shopping malls. Your favorite shows will be on 120 different cable channels. The

David M. Schwartz is the author of a number of titles for children, including How Much Is a Million?, If You Made a Million and Supergrandpa.



Trelease tries out a story on the most recent addition to his audience: newborn grandson Connor Reynolds.

dust balls will still be under the couch, and the dishes will still be in the sink. But 20 years from now, your little boy or girl will no longer be your *little* boy or girl."

Trelease knows that the pill he's prescribing as a cure for reading ills has the bitter taste of responsibility, and therefore he has no illusions that the read-aloud diet will last much longer than any other. He knows that people like the Worleys and the Thomases are rare. But he also knows that occasionally the torch is passed to individuals who multiply his efforts.

Mary Kay Bond, a new mother in Charleston, West Virginia, may have been the perfect candidate for Trelease's message when she first heard about him in the early 1980s. She already had the curious habit of reading *Newsweek* to her 3-month-old, despite the mirth it provoked in her family. A few years later, Bond and nine other mothers from her son's preschool rented Trelease's film (now a video) for viewings throughout the community. "We decided to develop a program that would last beyond the film," she says, as enthusiastic now as she was then. They organized volunteers to read in schools and to speak to expectant parents at prenatal

classes. Bond and her friends found grant money for a book-distribution program so that every child born in Kanawha County would get at least one book as a "birth" gift. Optimistically, they named the program "Read Aloud West Virginia." Read Aloud West Virginia had spread to eight counties by 1992, when it received a \$290,000 grant from the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation to expand throughout the state.

When Lynne Waihee first heard Jim Trelease in her own state of Hawaii, she was struck by the way he articulated the urgency of parents taking responsibility for their children's literacy. Waihee was inspired, and as the wife of Hawaii's governor, she was in a good position to mix inspiration with perspiration. She convinced the Rotary Clubs, libraries, schools and several corporations to develop the "Read To Me" campaign. Its goal is to see that every day, every child in Hawaii is read to for at least ten minutes. "For years, our literacy program had targeted the adult population," Waihee says, "but we realized that if we could focus attention on raising a literate population instead of fixing up an illiterate one, our chance of success would be much greater."

In keeping with Trelease's message that reading aloud is a commercial for reading itself, the Read To Me campaign promotes its message through a series of upbeat advertisements, including radio and TV spots. Every elementary school and library in Hawaii has received a bibliography of recommended children's books, a brochure called "Lynne Waihee's Reading Tips" and a ten-minute videotape on the "why's" and "how's" of reading aloud. Read To Me also enlists pediatricians to promote daily reading as part of a healthy lifestyle. Hawaii's enormously popular program has been adopted in Colorado and Wyoming. On the national level, the Association of Booksellers for Children and several other trade organizations have recently launched a similar campaign called "The Most Important 20 Minutes of Your Day."

In New York City, Arthur Tannenbaum was nearing retirement as an executive in 1988 when he came across Jim Trelease's book. Although he had no school-age children, he knew that there were plenty in the city who could benefit from being read to. "Children in New York were going through school without learning how to read, and in many cases nobody at home was reading to them. I said, 'Hey, I know how to do that! There are plenty of people working for companies in New York who know how to do that!'" With four colleagues, he visited a Manhattan school for the pleasure of sharing school lunch and a book, one-on-one, with a child. They returned to the same child with another book each week. "It may have been the personal attention as much as the reading," says Tannenbaum, "but we saw kids who were becoming more motivated to read." After he retired, Tannenbaum started the "Everybody Wins Foundation," devoted to matching volunteers from the pri-

vate and public sectors—now 700 and growing—with book-hungry schoolchildren.

Trelease is off his stool now, walking around the front of the auditorium, talking about books, spinning yarns, reading letters. He is serious and funny, touching and sarcastic, charming and cantankerous, but always as riveting as the books he promotes. Before concluding, he takes a visual survey of gender balance in the room and finds it about one-third male.

"Isn't this unbelievable, that men could go out to an evening program and there's not a hockey stick involved? Usually my audience is less than 10 percent male." But he points out one place where no shortage of males exists: in the remedial reading classes of American schools. In this country, boys constitute 70 percent

of such classes, but in some countries the ratio is reversed. "So the problem is not genetics," he contends. "It's athletics. It's the message Dad gives: 'What you see me get excited about, Son, is not *Charlotte's Web*. It's things you throw and things you catch. It's the Giants and the '49ers and the Kings.' Folks, that's sick. And you're looking at a sports fancier. I love sports. But guys, you can do it all: you can shoot some hoops in the driveway after supper and—I know this sounds incredible—on the very same night you can read *Charlotte's Web*!"

He finishes two hours after he began, and a hundred people go out into the rain, home to sleeping children. Tomorrow, for reasons they will not understand, a lot of kids in St. Helena, California, are going to hear their parents read to them, perhaps for the first time in years.

A Trelease compendium: titles tried and true

By JIM TRELEASE

Hey! Listen To This, 48 stories for reading aloud to K-Grade 4

Read All About It!, 50 stories for reading aloud to preteens and teens

The New Read-Aloud Handbook, all-time best-selling parent/teacher guide to children's books

INFANT BOOKS

The Little Dog Laughed and Other Nursery Rhymes From Mother Goose, illustrated by Lucy Cousins

WORDLESS PICTURE BOOKS

Deep in the Forest by Brinton Turkle
The Silver Pony by Lynd Ward

PICTURE BOOKS

Bill Peet Books (any of more than 30 titles by Bill Peet)
Thomas' Snowsuit by Robert Munsch
Somebody Loves You, Mr. Hatch by Eileen Spinelli
Mrs. Toggie's Zipper by Robin Pulver
The Minpins by Roald Dahl
The Poppy Seeds by Clyde Robert Bulla

FAIRY TALES AND THEIR PARODIES

Little Red Riding Hood by Trina S. Hyman
Flossie & the Fox by P. McKissack
Lon Po Po by Ed Young



The Principal's New Clothes by Stephanie Calmenson
The True Story of the Three Little Pigs by Jon Scieszka
The Three Little Wolves and the Big, Bad Pig by Eugene Trivizas
Jack and the Beanstalk by J. Howe
Jim and the Beanstalk by R. Briggs
Monster Mama by Liz Rosenberg

POETRY

Where the Sidewalk Ends and *A Light in the Attic* by Shel Silverstein

CHAPTER BOOKS AND NOVELS

My Father's Dragon, *Elmer and the Dragon* and *The Dragons of Blueland* by Ruth Stiles Gannett
The Friendship and The Gold Cadillac by Mildred Taylor
Rip-Roaring Russell, *Russell Rides Again*, *Russell Sprouts*, *Russell and*

Elisa and *'E' is for Elisa*, series by Johanna Hurwitz
Stone Fox by John Gardiner
El Guero by Elizabeth Borton de Trevino
Charlotte's Web by E.B. White
James and the Giant Peach by Roald Dahl
Where the Red Fern Grows by Wilson Rawls
Sideways Stories from Wayside School by Louis Sachar
The Indian in the Cupboard, series by Lynn Reid Banks

NOVELS (TEENS)

Hatchet, *The Foxman* and *Wood Song* by Gary Paulsen
Maniac Magee by Jerry Spinelli
The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle by Avi

TV turn-off can stop kids being 'telly tubbies'

By ALEX DEVINE

Turning off the tube may be the most effective way to stop kids from getting fat, a new study says.

A Stanford University research team found that kids who cut back TV viewing gained less weight than those who didn't.

Half of the 192 third- and fourth-graders in the study were encouraged to cut the number of hours they spent watching TV and playing video games, from more than 20 hours a week to less than seven.

The children also took part in a school program that encouraged them to think about how much time they spent watching TV and to come up with other ways to spend their free time.

About two-thirds of the kids complied with the regime, and parents signed a form each day confirming that their children's viewing stayed within the study's guidelines.

On average, those kids gained two pounds less than children who were not asked to change their habits — and they gained almost an inch less around the waist — said Dr. Thomas Robinson, who led the study.

Childhood obesity has often been blamed on too much TV. But previous studies have found only a weak link between

gain and the time children spend watching TV.

This is the first study that actually got kids to reduce their TV viewing, monitored their weight gain, and compared them to children who did not change their habits, Robinson said.

It is also the first evidence that a behavioral program at school can influence children's viewing habits.

The children did not do more exercise, but Robinson believes fewer hours spent in front of the tube might have led them to do more "light activities" — something between exercising and being totally sedentary.

The children also ate fewer meals in front of the television. Studies have shown that kids tend to eat fattier foods while watching TV.

Even a small reduction in calorie consumption could account for the weight loss, Robinson says.

For instance, the calorie equivalent of one additional regular soft drink a day translates into an annual weight gain of about 15 pounds.

Robinson plans a wider study starting in September, that will monitor children from 12 different schools.

In addition to the effects on obesity of reduced TV viewing, it will monitor changes in academic performance and anti-social behavior.

The number of obese U.S. children has doubled to about 20 percent in the past 20 years.

Overweight children are increasingly suffering from health problems that traditionally afflict people in middle age — high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes.

"It's turning into one of the biggest public health problems in the United States and the world," Robinson said.

"If this were an infectious disease, we would call it an epidemic."

The kids did not do more exercise, but researchers believe fewer hours spent in front of the tube might have led them to do more "light activities."

Literacy program teaches children how to watch TV

By CLAUDIA PUIG
Los Angeles Times

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Al Narath, a 12th-grade student, says he will never look at television the same way again.

"I watched quite a lot of TV growing up," he says. "What I have realized is it doesn't take a lot of thought when you're watching."

"I still watch television, but I'm more careful. I watch it less and, when I do, I pay more attention. And I've learned that TV is a business. Everything you see has been planned for weeks, even years. And most of the time they're trying to sell you something."

Narath, 17, is a graduate of media literacy, which has taught about 2,600 New Mexico elementary and high school students to analyze TV programs, see through advertising messages and understand how the media work.

New Mexico is at the forefront of a growing national movement to educate children about the media, driven by the concern that youngsters simply absorb what they see and hear on TV. Just as parents and educators teach children good eating habits, the thinking goes, they must also teach them good viewing habits.

As of last year, all school-age children in New Mexico must study media literacy as part of the state's push to become "the first media literate state." Similar efforts are under way in 15 states and individual courses are springing up in schools in nearly every state.

"We don't think anybody is going to eliminate television or other media from their lives," says Bob McCannon, director of New Mexico's Media Literacy Project. "You can't just turn it off. But kids can become wise consumers."

Media literacy training is based on the premise that children should choose what they watch with care. From kindergarten through high school, students learn how television works — the mechanics and

ultimate intent of programming. In the process, analysis and critical skills are encouraged.

A surge of interest in the past year has dovetailed with the renewed focus by politicians and social critics on excessive sex and violence in the media.

Media literacy is seen, at least in some circles, as a simple antidote that doesn't involve pricey technology, advertiser boycotts or government threats.

But, the very fact that it doesn't employ pressure tactics also inspires critics to call it ineffective or to claim that focusing mainly on viewers' critical skills lets media producers off the hook.

Proponents respond that boycotts and other extreme measures have not proved successful and that inspiring children to outsmart TV will pay off in the long run.

At a time when many children spend more time watching TV than reading, many educators and parents say that teaching them to understand what they see on the screen is as important as teaching them to read and do math.

Many states are taking up the gauntlet with large-scale programs in media literacy.

The number of practitioners nationwide ranges from about 4,000 teaching in schools, according to a conservative estimate by the National Alliance for Media Education, to 15,000 teaching on an informal basis, according to Renee Hobbs, a Harvard-based professor and a movement pioneer.

And unlike other reform efforts, this one has the backing of some media industries.

The Parent Teachers Association has joined forces with the National Cable Television Association on "Know TV," a series of 32 workshops on media literacy held around the country. The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences also recently allocated \$400,000 for a two-year outreach project.

Parents[®] *make the difference!*

Reading With Your Child

Celebrate Black History Month With Your Child

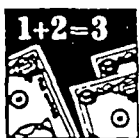


February is Black History Month. It's a good time for everyone to learn more about the contributions of African Americans.

On your trip to the library, look for books by and about African Americans. Many libraries have special displays. If yours doesn't, ask the librarian for suggestions.

Reinforcing Learning

Tape Recorder Helps Children With History



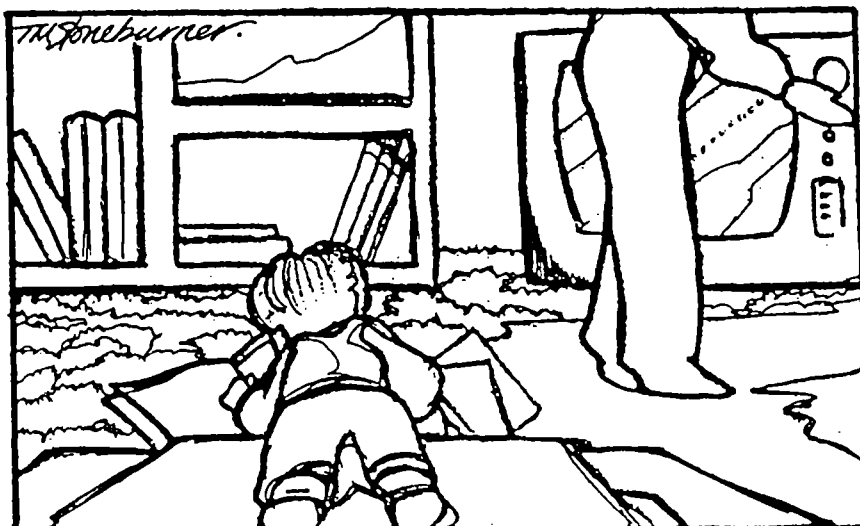
History is much more than facts. It is the story of people and events.

If you have a child who is having trouble learning about a particular historical period, here's an idea that might make history come alive.

Give your child a tape recorder. Suggest that he record a "radio broadcast" exactly as it might have happened. He can add sound effects to make the story more exciting.

For example, if he is studying Paul Revere's ride, he might try doing "man in the street" interviews.

What Families 'Do' Counts More Than Income, Education



A new report—capturing 30 years of research—shows that what a family does is more important to a child's success than family income or education.

Among the most important things parents can do to help children achieve:

- **Establish family routines** for doing homework and chores. Eat meals together and go to bed at a regular time.
- **Read together** a little every day.
- **Use TV wisely.** Limit viewing on school nights. Help kids select educational, non-violent programs. Watch and discuss programs together.
- **Monitor other out-of-school activities.** Working parents should make regular phone calls to an older child at home.
- **Express high expectations.** Always offer praise and

encouragement for your children's achievements.

- **Set a good example.** Talk about drugs, alcohol, education and other values you want your kids to have.
- **Talk often and openly.** Listen and help children solve their concerns and worries.
- **Keep in touch** with the school. Be involved and stay informed about your child's progress.
- **Use community resources.** Take advantage of after-school activities. Seek health care, housing assistance, adult education and family and employment counseling, if needed.

Source: *Strong Families, Strong Schools: Building Community Partnerships for Learning*, September 1994 (U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20202, 800/USA-LEARN), 60 pp.

Practical Ideas for Parents to Help Their Children

Quantifying America's Decline

By WILLIAM J. BENNETT

Is our culture declining? I have tried to quantify the answer to this question with the creation of the Index of Leading Cultural Indicators.

In the early 1960s, the Census Bureau began publishing the Index of Leading Economic Indicators. These 11 measurements, taken together, represent the best means we now have of interpreting current business developments and predicting future economic trends.

The Index of Leading Cultural Indicators, a compilation of the Heritage Foundation and Empower America, attempts to bring a similar kind of data-based analysis to cultural issues. It is a statistical portrait (from 1960 to the present) of the moral, social and behavioral conditions of modern American society—matters that, in our time, often travel under the banner of "values."

Perhaps no one will be surprised to learn that, according to the index, America's cultural condition is far from healthy. What is shocking is just how precipitously American life has declined in the past 30 years, despite the enormous governmental effort to improve it.

Since 1960, the U.S. population has increased 41%; the gross domestic product has nearly tripled; and total social spending by all levels of government (measured in constant 1990 dollars) has risen from \$143.73 billion to \$787 billion—more than a fivefold increase. Inflation-adjusted spending on welfare has increased by 630%, spending on education by 225%.

But during the same 30-year period there has been a 560% increase in violent crime; a 419% increase in illegitimate births; a quadrupling in divorce rates; a tripling of the percentage of children living in single-parent homes; more than a 200% increase in the teenage suicide rate; and a drop of almost 80 points in SAT scores.

Clearly many modern-day social pathologies have gotten worse. More important, they seem impervious to government's attempts to cure them. Although the Great Society and its many social programs have had some good effects, there is a vast body of evidence suggesting that these "remedies" have reached the limits of their success.

Perhaps more than anything else, America's cultural decline is evidence of a shift in the public's attitudes and beliefs. Social scientist James Q. Wilson writes that "the powers exercised by the institutions of social control have been constrained and people, especially young people, have embraced an ethos that values

self-expression over self-control." The findings of pollster Daniel Yankelovich seem to confirm this diagnosis. Our society now places less value than before on what we owe to others as a matter of moral obligation; less value on sacrifice as a moral good; less value on social conformity and respectability; and less value on correctness and restraint in matters of physical pleasure and sexuality.

Some writers have spoken eloquently on these matters. When the late Walker Percy

was asked what concerned him most about America's future, he answered: "Probably the fear of seeing America, with all its great strength and beauty and freedom . . . gradually subside into decay through default and be defeated, not by the Communist movement, demonstrably a bankrupt system, but from within by weariness, boredom, cynicism, greed and in the end helplessness before its great problems." Alexander Solzhenitsyn, in a speech earlier this year, put it this way: "The West . . .

Eight Cultural Indicators

AVERAGE DAILY TV VIEWING

1960	5:06 hours
1965	5:29 hours
1970	5:56 hours
1975	6:07 hours
1980	6:36 hours
1985	7:07 hours
1990	6:55 hours

Source: Nielsen Media Research

SAT SCORES

1960	975
1965	969
1970	948
1975	910
1980	890
1985	908
1990	900

Source: The College Board

% OF ILLEGITIMATE BIRTHS

1960	5.3%
1970	10.7%
1980	18.4%

Source: Center for Health Statistics

CHILDREN WITH SINGLE MOTHERS

1960	8%
1970	11%
1980	18%

Sources: Bureau of the Census; Donald Hernandez, *The American Child: Resources from Family, Government and the Economy*

CHILDREN ON WELFARE

1960	3.5%
1965	4.5%
1970	8.5%
1975	11.8%
1980	11.5%
1985	11.2%

Source: Bureau of the Census; U.S. House of Representatives

TEEN SUICIDE RATE

1960	3.6%
1965	4.0%
1970	5.9%
1975	7.6%
1980	8.5%
1985	10.0%

Source: National Center for Health Statistics

VIOLENT CRIME RATE (per 100,000)

1960	16.1
1965	20.0
1970	36.4
1975	48.8
1980	59.7
1985	53.3
1990	73.2

Source: F.B.I.

MEDIAN PRISON SENTENCE*

1954	22.5 days
1964	12.1 days
1974	5.5 days
1984	7.7 days
1988	8.5 days

*"Serious Crime": murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny/theft and motor vehicle theft.

Source: National Center for Policy Analysis

EDUCATION

How the family factors into classroom learning

By Dennis Kelly
USA TODAY

Books and magazines are disappearing from homes; students are missing too much school, and they're watching inordinate amounts of TV.

Educators have long complained that the social conditions that exist at home — beyond their control — have greatly contributed to the slide in the nation's collective academic performance.

But if they needed better ammunition to make that connection, they will find it in *America's Smallest School: The Family*, a new report by the Educational Testing Service, the same people who conduct the Scholastic Aptitude Test and the national tests of educational progress.

Using data from those previous tests and other surveys, the report shows a correlation between factors at home and a state's average test scores that, in total, surprised even researchers who had seen these numbers individually before. To wit:

► Eighth-graders in North Dakota lead the nation in the percentage who have three or more types of reading materials (books, magazines, newspapers or encyclopedias) in their home. And they also scored highest in the country on a national math test that involved 37 states, two territories and Washington, D.C., that volunteered to take it.

► Students in D.C. led the nation in eighth-graders (33%) who watch six hours or more of TV per day, and also had the second worst math score.

► Washington, D.C., students are second from the bottom when it comes to eighth-graders who read more than 10 pages a day at home. And they scored second from the bottom in math.

"I was surprised the correlation is so high between factors at home state-by-state and the performance of their students," says Paul Barton, co-author of the ETS report.

The statistics will tell you that about half the variation in state scores can be explained simply by the variation in how much a state's students read at home, he says.

But factors are also interrelated. States with high percentages of kids who watch lots of TV, for instance, are probably going to have low percentages of kids doing much reading at home, Barton says.

On balance the message from the report is clear: education is affected by the smallest of its school systems — the family.

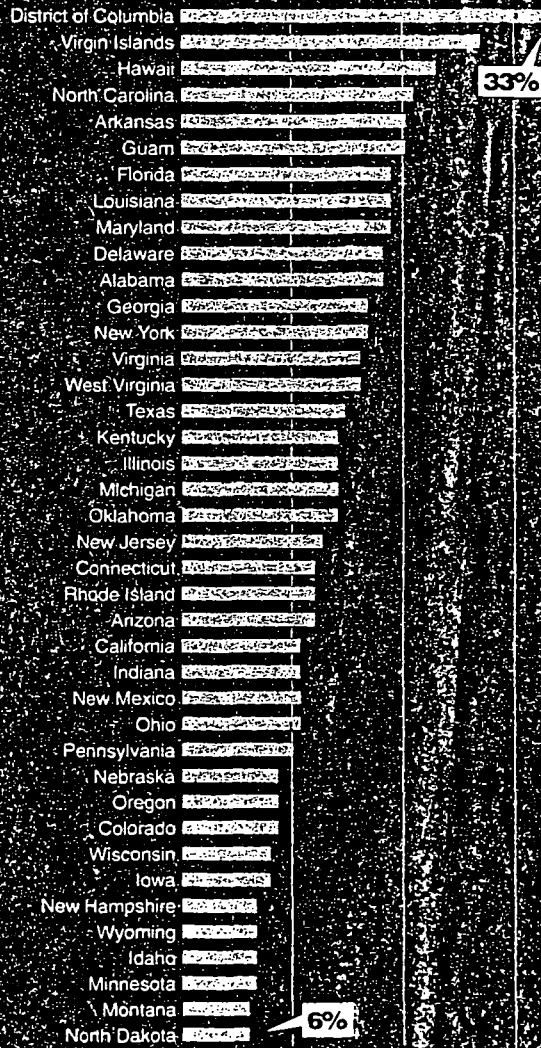
Just as children are helped, for example, by a low ratio of students to teachers in school, kids are better off if there are two parents at home. Two parents generally means a higher income level bringing more resources into the home, but also that there are two adults to help with the learning, Barton says. And yet the percentage of children living with a single parent has more than doubled since 1965.

Another tidbit from the report worth noting: ► U.S. kids have relatively lots of materials to read, but don't use them. Among 15 countries surveyed in one international assessment of education, the U.S. students reported having more reading materials at home than students in nine of those countries. Yet, the U.S. ranked 12th in percentage of kids who read for fun every day.

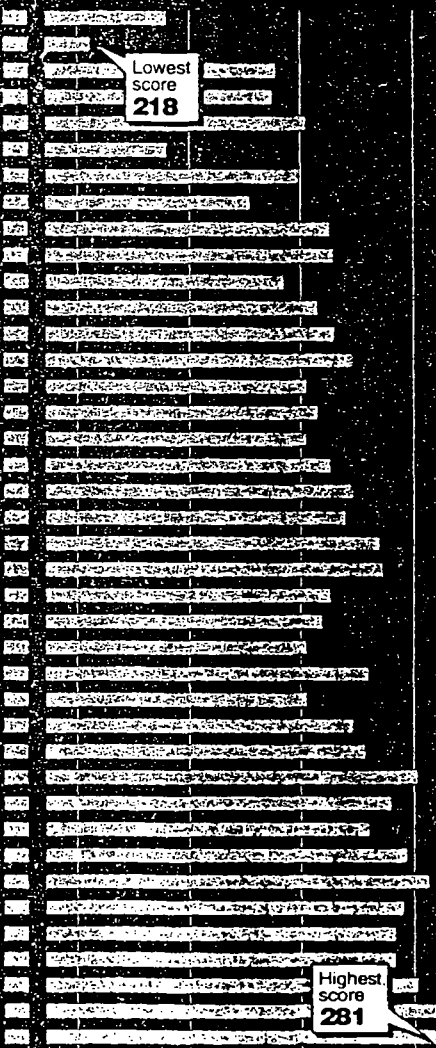
The charts on this page give a snapshot of how these at-home factors affect a state's performance.

The TV-school connection

% watching 6 hours or more a day...

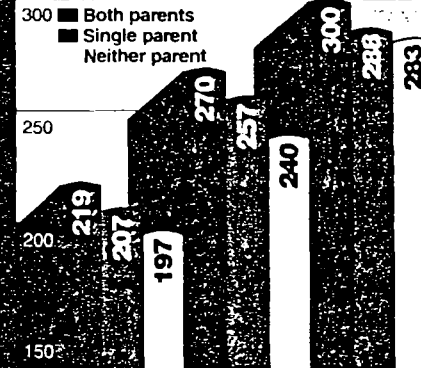


...and the resulting math score



Parents as teachers

Two parents at home generally means higher incomes and more resources plus extra adults to help teach, findings show.



Grade 4 Grade 8 Grade 12
Based on scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress in mathematics, 1991. Scores calculated on a 0 to 500 scale, 500 being perfect.

Read to succeed

The numbers are clear: The more kids read, the more they know.

