

C. as would who loves C-span
where else can I watch...

Draft 03/02/99 4:30pm
Jeff Shesol

PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
VIDEOTAPED REMARKS ON THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF C-SPAN
WASHINGTON, DC
March 25, 1999

I want to extend my best wishes and congratulations to Brian Lamb, to the Board of Directors, and to all of you at C-SPAN on 20 remarkable years. I wish I could join you in person, but I want you to know that Hillary and I are thinking of you on your anniversary -- and, even more important, that we'll keep watching you in the years ahead.

Brian, you're right to call C-SPAN "America's electronic town hall." It's easy to forget what a revolutionary idea that was, 20 years ago. Before C-SPAN, people rarely saw more of Congress than an artist's sketch on the evening news. But for two decades now, C-SPAN has brought Americans closer to their elected representatives. C-SPAN doesn't edit. It doesn't filter. It gives people the opportunity to see things as they happen, and to make up their own minds. In our democracy, C-SPAN is essential. In the world of television, you're unique -- and uniquely important.

Your programming is also -- how should I put it? -- well, it's also unique. Where else can we watch gavel-to-gavel coverage of the House Subcommittee on Subcommittees? Where else can we find public officials speaking not in soundbites but for hours. . . and hours. . . and hours? Where else but C-SPAN can we join a raging debate about debt reduction. . . at 3:00 am?

Well, count me in. I'm often in the audience, whether the subject is Social Security or the latest political biography. I know C-SPAN wasn't designed using cutting-edge market research, but if it had been, it might've been designed for someone like me. I even think Brian Lamb is a dynamic, energetic host.

In any event, C-SPAN never promised to entertain us 24 hours a day. You promised to inform us, to educate us, to link us to one another. That is exactly what you have done for twenty years. And from TV to radio, from political conventions to press conferences, and from "Washington Journal" to "Booknotes," C-SPAN has still got it covered. For this viewer, C-SPAN is "must-see TV."

Again, my congratulations -- and my thanks -- to all of you who continue to make C-SPAN so successful. Happy anniversary. . . and best wishes for the next twenty years.

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Your programming is also -- how should I put it? -- well, it's also unique. Where else but C-SPAN can we join a raging debate about debt reduction. . . at 3:00 am? Where else can we watch gavel-to-gavel coverage of the House Subcommittee on Really Obscure Agricultural Programs? Where else can we find public officials speaking not in soundbites but for hours and hours and hours?

I say this not just to poke a little fun, because it's exactly what I -- and millions of other Americans -- love about C-SPAN. You never promised to entertain us 24 hours a day. You promised to inform us, to educate us, to link us to one another. That is exactly what you have done for twenty years. And from TV to radio, from political conventions to press conferences, and from "Washington Journal" to "Booknotes," C-SPAN has still got it covered.

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LAMB

series of painful setbacks made me realize that Les Grands wasn't home anymore." As a freelance choreographer, he created a dozen new works in the early 1990s, many of which were remarkable for their distinctly sensual character (both *Désir* and *Fifteen Heterosexual Duets*, for example, feature fervid pas de deux), but the choreographer felt increasingly distanced from the passion that had illuminated his work for years. "It was all vicarious, physically and emotionally," he told Robert Everett-Green of the *Toronto Globe and Mail* (July 18, 1992). "I decided I actually wanted to stop doing these pieces and start living it." He went so far as to begin assigning exit titles to his ballets, such as *Fare Well* (Mozart, 1991), a piece he made for the National Ballet of Canada, and *The End* (Brahms, 1992), created for the San Francisco Ballet.

In 1992 Kudelka accepted an appointment as artist in residence with the National Ballet of Canada. The move back to Toronto was a difficult one for him, given the anxiety he had experienced there previously, but discussions with the National Ballet's new artistic director, Reid Anderson, convinced him that his works would receive more active support. Anderson had been trying to entice Kudelka to return to the company ever since the premiere of *Pastorale*, which the choreographer had created for the National Ballet in 1990. Set to Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, *Pastorale*, which depicts a visit to the country by a group of aristocrats but is, as Anna Kisselgoff noted in the *New York Times* (May 15, 1990), "sexual, anguished, elegant . . . ; anything but the lighthearted frolic its title suggests," was a huge hit with critics and audiences alike. "I know great choreography when I see it," Anderson, a veteran dancer, told Paula Citron. "I'm enthralled by the way his steps are appliquéd onto the music—not only reflecting the music but taking it beyond what the composer tells you alone. James is not just a person making steps; he's a total artist."

Since rejoining the National Ballet of Canada, Kudelka has choreographed a half-dozen new ballets, for his own company and other troupes. Some of those works have revealed facets of his personality that had previously been unexpressed—his sense of humor, for example, and his homosexuality. *Making Ballet*, a work he designed for Ballet British Columbia, satirizes classical ballet traditions. Danced in silence, the piece features swan queens, in sylph wings and tutus, partnered by princes discarding handfuls of feathers, but the centerstage spoof is set against a troubling backdrop: a pair of men in shirts, ties, and undershorts dragging each other in a circle around the dancers, raising the specter of AIDS and ultimately questioning the relevance of art to life. Other notable recent works include *Cruel World* (Tchaikovsky), "a near-perfect ballet," to borrow Anna Kisselgoff's description, that earned a roaring ovation at its world premiere in May 1994, and *States of Grace* (Hindemith, 1995), both for American Ballet Theatre, and, for the National Ballet, a nightmarish new version of the *Miraculous Mandarin* (Bartók,

1993) and *The Actress* (Chopin, 1994), a showpiece for the company's reigning prima ballerina, Karen Kain. Although recurrent back injuries caused him to curtail his dancing some years ago, Kudelka recently returned to the stage himself, in the character role of the dollmaker Dr. Coppélius in the National's production of *Coppélia*.

James Kudelka has a reputation for being remote and moody, but interviewers have invariably found him to be articulate and at times amusing, even when discussing the years of therapy he has undergone to deal with the physical and emotional stresses that have accompanied his career. "I get used and abused quite easily," he admitted to the *Toronto Globe and Mail*'s Robert Everett-Green, who nonetheless noted that a boyish smile frequently cracked "the Dostoevskyan severity of Kudelka's face—solemn, searching, with a stubble of black beard." Kudelka is the recipient of several awards for his choreography, including the Isadora Duncan Award and the Dora Mavor Moore Award. Besides commissions from major dance companies, he has created works for individuals and for smaller ensembles, including Montreal Danse, Dancemakers of Toronto, and Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, and he choreographed pieces for Expo 1986 (*Collisions*) and the 1988 Winter Olympics Arts Festival (*Concerto Grosso*). By Kudelka's own admission, much of his work reflects his life. "My entire creative career has been autobiographical," he confessed to Paula Citron. "And the choreography has been most successful when it has come from a deep place."

Selected Biographical References: *Dance* 51:69+ Mr '77 pors, 68:94+ F '94 pors; *Macleans* p 62+ F 21 '94 por; *N Y Times* II p25+ Ap 10 '88, II p1+ Ap 17 '94 pors; *Toronto Globe and Mail* p79 N 23 '94 por; *International Dictionary of Ballet*, 1993

Lamb, Brian

Oct. 9, 1941– Cable television executive; interviewer. Address: c/o C-SPAN, 400 N. Capitol St. NW, Washington, DC 20001

With the monkish air of tranquility, detachment, and meticulous fairness that he brings to his television appearances, Brian Lamb sets the tone of the Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network, better known by the acronym C-SPAN, the nonprofit, no-nonsense, no-frills "anti-network," to use James Lardner's term, of which he is the founder, chairman, and chief executive officer as well as a program host. C-SPAN regards itself as "America's electronic town hall," keeping cable television viewers abreast of public events and issues and providing them with an interactive link to their elected officials in Washington and other federal government officials. Others have described it as

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C-SPAN

Brian Lamb

"video vérité" and "television for the postmodern age" and hailed it as the most important breakthrough in broadcasting since cable itself. "This is not television," Lamb himself has said of his creation, meaning that it represents the antithesis of the other networks, with their slick packaging, sound-biting of news and public affairs, and commercial interruptions. As conceived by Lamb, C-SPAN is dedicated in large measure to chronicling America's public life through an unblinking and unfiltered camera eye, preferably live, as open-endedly as possible, and without a hint of editing, spin, or biased commentary (on C-SPAN's part). Funded entirely by the cable television industry, C-SPAN began televising the proceedings of the United States House of Representatives live and gavel to gavel in 1979. Since 1986, when it expanded to include a second channel, it has been covering the Senate as well, on C-SPAN 2.

In addition to the floor proceedings, C-SPAN regularly covers selected congressional committee hearings. Outside of Congress, it offers detailed coverage of the workings of the federal government's executive and judicial branches, of other areas of American public life, and of some international events. The network takes its cameras to such events as White House press briefings, other governmental news conferences, and speeches and symposia on public issues in such venues as the National Press Club, political think-tanks, and university forums. It provides marathon coverage of political campaigns and the national political conventions, does in-depth profiles of political figures, and takes its viewers behind the scenes in media, including radio talk shows, which it occasionally simulcasts. The programming, set in its Capitol Hill studios, includes journalistic roundta-

bles, call-in shows (including the three-hour Washington Journal, each morning), and interviews with writers and others. C-SPAN transmits twenty-four hours a day with a staff and budget that are shoe-string in comparison with the Cable News Network and even with National Public Radio: approximately 200 employees and an annual budget of about \$24 million. Carried by more than 90 percent of America's cable systems, it serves some 60 million households with some 140 million potential viewers.

Brian P. Lamb, the son of a tavern owner turned wholesale beer distributor, was born in Lafayette, Indiana on October 9, 1941. James Warren, the media critic of the Chicago Tribune (March 15, 1992), considered it "a bit ironic" that Lamb would be "the one to illuminate the political system for so many," considering "the political lesson of [his] dad's career." "Because of Indiana's [liquor] licensing system, the father, and many others, were beholden to the political establishment," Warren wrote. "Every time a new governor was elected, Democrat or Republican, the father had to 'keep on the guy's good side,' the son says, and contribute financially." "It made me sick," Lamb said, as quoted by Warren.

At Jefferson High School in Lafayette, Lamb was junior-class president, the basketball team's water boy, and founder and president of the Bronco Broadcasters, a club for aspiring radio and television broadcasters. Bill Fraser, the club's adviser, later recalled how Lamb, "fascinated with broadcasting," would come to the local radio station where Fraser worked to observe the proceedings there. After graduating from high school, Lamb majored in speech and communications at nearby Purdue University, where he was president of his senior class. According to Henry Rosenthal, the owner and manager of radio station WASK-AM, in Lafayette, where Lamb had been a part-time disk jockey during his student days, Lamb "had no other interest but media and politics." During the summer between his junior and senior years at Purdue, Lamb created and hosted Dance Date, a daily show patterned after American Bandstand, at a local television station.

Upon his graduation from Purdue, Lamb enrolled in the law school at Indiana University at Bloomington, but he soon dropped out and enlisted in the United States Navy, in 1964. Following two years at sea, he was assigned, with the rank of lieutenant junior grade, to the Pentagon's public affairs office, where his chief task was fielding telephone calls from reporters. Observing the media coverage of events in Washington, D.C., to which he himself was a witness, such as demonstrations against the war in Vietnam, he realized that what television audiences were seeing was "only a portion of what was really going on," and he dreamed of the possibility of focusing a raw and dispassionate eye on public affairs.

Following his discharge from the navy in 1967, Lamb worked briefly as an assistant manager of a television station in Indiana. Returning to Wash-

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ington in 1968, he worked there over the following three years as, successively, a radio reporter for United Press International and press secretary to Senator Peter H. Dominick, Republican of Colorado. He began to see the feasibility of his idea of a public-affairs television forum when, beginning in 1971, he was working in President Richard Nixon's White House as an assistant to the director of the Office of Telecommunications Policy, which was charged with deregulating the telecommunications industry and leaving it free to utilize the emerging satellite and cable-television technology—including duplexing, multiplexing, parabolic dishes, and transponders. "You could begin to see how you could put something together that didn't require megabucks," Lamb told Thomas J. Meyer, who interviewed him for the *New York Times Magazine* (March 15, 1992). "When I finally understood the economics of it, I knew it would work." By the time he left the Office of Telecommunications Policy, in May 1974, he had conceived what his friend Henry Goldberg, the communications lawyer, has described as a plan for "a network that relied on the alternative media of cable and satellite to bring Washington into people's homes."

After leaving the Office of Telecommunications Policy, Lamb became the editor of the newsletter *Media Reports* and the Washington bureau chief for the trade magazine *Cablevision*. At the same time, he began seeking support for his envisioned network from cable-system operators, pointing out that they would thus distinguish themselves in the eyes of the public by providing a service not rendered by the traditional television industry. He was encouraged in that effort by Robert Titsch Sr., his superior at *Cablevision*. "Brian was driven by the dream," Titsch told James Lardner for a profile of Lamb in the *New Yorker* (March 14, 1994). "He felt that the American public was getting screwed by television. He felt that the government—the most powerful government in the world—was hidden from its constituents and that people should see it."

"There was a tremendous amount of rejection," Lardner quoted Lamb as saying with regard to the early response to his efforts. "People would pat you on the head, and say, 'Nice little boy, keep it up, Brian.'" The cable industry, then barely a decade old, was still composed largely of its original operators, a group not noticeably disposed to looking beyond profit and loss to public service. Amos B. Hostetter Jr., the chairman and chief executive officer of Continental Cablevision and a member of C-SPAN's board of directors, told Lardner: "These people were not Time Warner or Cox Broadcasting. They were small-town appliance dealers who put an antenna up on a hill and brought a wire down from there to hook your television set up, so they could sell you the television set."

The idea of introducing television cameras into the House of Representatives had been circulating for years, with the assumption that the television industry would be in control, selecting bits of footage for inclusion in news broadcasts. When Thom-

as P. ("Tip") O'Neill Jr. became Speaker of the House in 1977, he made it known that he would favor the installation of television cameras in the chamber, but with the proviso that they be under the control of the House, an arrangement unacceptable to both the commercial networks and the Public Broadcasting Service. In October 1977 Lamb, a pragmatist who was willing to accept O'Neill's terms as a trade-off for the opportunity to initiate C-SPAN, informed Representative Lionel Van Deerlin, the chairman of the House Communications Subcommittee, that House sessions might be carried in full through a cable linkup. At the urging of Van Deerlin, and over the objections of the networks, the House voted to approve O'Neill's plan for installing television cameras during the Ninety-fifth Congress.

In the meantime, Lamb had been winning support for his venture from some progressive cable executives, including Robert Rosencrans, the founder of Columbia International Cable, which developed into United Artists Cable. Following the House vote, Lamb, seeded with twenty-five thousand dollars from Rosencrans, collected from within the cable industry the financial backing necessary for the launching of his nonprofit corporation, the projected annual budget of which at that time was in the magnitude of four hundred thousand dollars, minuscule by television industry standards. Through the intermediacy of Bob Schmidt, the president of Communications Technology Management, and Gary Hymel, an aide to Representative O'Neill, he met with the House speaker and came away with a verbal accord. In the following months Lamb formed the corporation called C-SPAN with the help of Robert Rosencrans and others. Rosencrans, who had joined forces with Madison Square Garden, the sports and entertainment center in New York City, to form the MSG Network, made it possible for C-SPAN initially to use that evening-oriented network's satellite channel during the day at a reduced rate. Rosencrans became first chairman of the board of C-SPAN.

C-SPAN, with a staff of four and one telephone line, was originally headquartered in a five-hundred-square-foot office in an apartment building in the Washington, D.C., suburb of Arlington, Virginia. It began transmitting to as many as 3.5 million households on a trial basis on March 19, 1979, and the system was officially approved by the House two weeks later. Its first annual budget was \$480,000, and during the network's first five years of operation its total cumulated budget was comparable to the current annual salary of the ABC television broadcast journalist Diane Sawyer, according to James Lardner. During those years the television cameras in the House of Representatives were trained exclusively on the representatives who were speaking. That situation changed in the spring of 1984, when a small group of conservative Republicans began to take political advantage of "special orders," a time slot in which speeches can be made on the House floor following the end of

the day's normal legislative proceedings. House Speaker O'Neill viewed the tactic as "the lowest thing" he had seen during his career in the House. Lest the lack of response to the partisan speech-making give the wrong impression to the television audience, in May of that year he ordered that the cameras occasionally pan the virtually empty chamber. The contretemps brought C-SPAN into the national front-page news for the first time.

Outside the House, C-SPAN began practicing a different form of political coverage during the Democratic presidential primaries of 1980, when it had a staff of seven network-wide. At a rally for Massachusetts senator Edward M. Kennedy in Philadelphia, it trained its cameras not on Kennedy and others on the podium but on the crowd, occasionally focusing on an individual. C-SPAN staffers later chatted with campaign workers at independent candidate John Anderson's headquarters in Philadelphia, and still later they talked with political reporters at a Philadelphia newspaper office. "We wanted to go out and do no editing, no embellishments," Lamb explained to James Warren of the *Chicago Tribune*. "It's the same now. We try to give people the sense of what you'd see if you were actually in the room."

The most popular of the extracongressional offerings introduced on C-SPAN in the early 1980s was a morning call-in program devoted to discussing how the news of the day was variously presented in newspapers across the country. "It's pure television, with all the hokum taken out," the Washington-based journalist Charles McDowell commented, as quoted in the *Chicago Tribune* (June 18, 1985). "A man holds up a newspaper in front of a camera. What a remarkable notion! A throwback to some linear age." By the mid-1980s, C-SPAN had ninety employees and an annual budget of \$5.9 million (roughly the cost of two evenings of prime-time programming on a mainstream network), and it was being carried by two thousand cable affiliates with a potential audience of twenty-one million households. In 1984, in addition to fourteen hundred hours of House floor debate and committee hearings, C-SPAN produced 865 hours of live call-in programming in which more than twelve thousand callers in more than two thousand cities participated. While the mainstream networks limited their coverage of the Democratic and Republican conventions to the prime-time hours that year, C-SPAN covered both conventions in their entirety and provided the Public Broadcasting Service with its convention footage.

On May 4, 1987 the *Miami Herald* broke the story of aspiring Democratic presidential nominee Gary Hart's alleged adulterous fling with Donna Rice. The following day, when the press in general was zeroing in on the scandal, C-SPAN, typically, was alone among the electronic media in broadcasting Hart's entire foreign-policy speech. In the presidential primaries of 1988, C-SPAN followed candidates out on the stump, televising "extraordinary wireless mike sessions," as Douglas Davis ob-

served in the *New York Times* (July 10, 1988). "The channel's cameras are allowing the much-abused medium of television to reveal its basic strengths," Davis wrote. "Where the commercial networks strive at great expense to distill and therefore distort the world, C-SPAN can only afford to turn it on. C-SPAN gives us the visual world as a spontaneous, unrehearsed feast, in which the viewer is the guest of honor." Davis confessed to being part of a national addiction to C-SPAN, a habit he touted as "a singular sign of growing political sanity, of a lust for unmediated access to public affairs."

In 1991, a year before Arkansas governor Bill Clinton declared his candidacy for the Democratic nomination for president of the United States, Clinton's media strategists saw that his ability to talk about issues extemporaneously could be shown to advantage before C-SPAN's running cameras. Accordingly, they arranged for him to speak, to saturation effect, at Democratic Party events that C-SPAN was covering. Thus did C-SPAN inadvertently contribute to the emergence of Clinton as the front-runner in the Democratic primaries of 1992. During the 1992 Democratic National Convention, at which Clinton was nominated, C-SPAN was widely praised for letting the television audience directly witness the proceedings on the podium, without the often obtrusive commentary on other networks. Similarly, while the other networks presented bowdlerized footage of the "march on Washington" by gay activists in 1993, C-SPAN televised the event intact, including every obscenity and every instance of foul language caught by its cameras and microphones. "We think that people should have a chance to see the whole thing and make up their own mind," Lamb explained. When the Persian Gulf war was taking shape, C-SPAN displayed its characteristic thoroughness by documenting in almost tedious detail, in footage lasting eight hours, a National Guard unit's odyssey from North Carolina to Saudi Arabia. That project was child's play in comparison with the network's presentation, day in and day out, of World War II footage and live coverage on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the D-Day invasion, in June 1994. Also during 1994 C-SPAN televised reenactments of the Lincoln-Douglas debates from the cities and towns in Illinois where they had originally taken place.

Since the mid-1980s C-SPAN has been headquartered in a suite of offices in view of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. Among the programs broadcast from there are viewer call-in shows, filling some three hours every day, which give viewers the opportunity to speak directly to their legislators, other policymakers, and journalists; a Sunday morning retrospective of the issues raised by the previous week's events; and *Booknotes*, an interview with an author conducted by Lamb on Sunday evenings. C-SPAN camera crews go out into the field, to the White House Rose Garden and other locations, for such programs as *Event of the Day*. The weekly program *Road to the White House* looks at potential presidential candidates. In Con-

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gress, where the cameras are still in the hands of the House and Senate. C-SPAN is actively seeking to install and control its own cameras. Another goal is to add to its programming schedule the televising of arguments before the Supreme Court, where cameras have thus far been forbidden. From overseas, C-SPAN brings to its viewers the daily *Evening News from Moscow*, the British prime minister's "question time" in the House of Commons, other public-affairs programming from Britain, and periodic coverage of legislative activity in other countries. Since November 1993 C-SPAN's "School Bus," a motorized exhibit, has been traveling all over the United States, demonstrating to local communities the usefulness of the network in educating citizens in public affairs and bringing them in closer touch with their government.

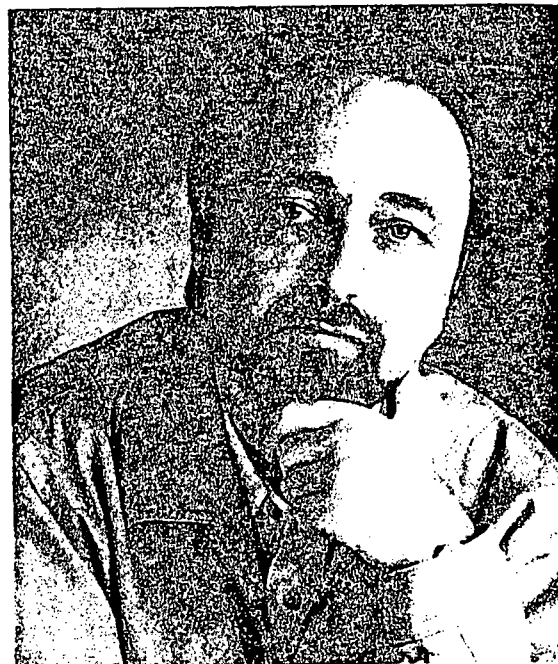
By policy, C-SPAN has no on-air stars. Those who appear on-camera as moderators or interviewers (including Susan Swain, a senior vice-president, and Bruce Collins, the network's legal counsel) do so not only secondarily to their full-time off-camera duties but also as self-effacingly as possible—almost anonymously. None adheres to this rule more strictly than Lamb, who is the network's most conspicuous face but has never uttered his name or revealed a personal bias on camera. "I am not a Ted Turner, who first built the [CNN] network on personality," he explained to Sharon Geltner for her profile of him in the *Saturday Evening Post* (December 1985). "In order for C-SPAN to work, it has to be cooperative. This can't be an ego trip or be seen as empire-building." At every opportunity he lavishes praise on his staff, who are kept aware of his favorite motto: "You can accomplish anything as long as you don't mind who gets the credit."

Brian Lamb is a little below average in height, has bright blue eyes set deep in a round, usually serene face, and dresses impeccably, in dark, classically cut suits, pressed white shirts, and conservative ties. On-camera, his strongest reaction is expressed in a benign, controlled smile. Off-camera, he remains generally mild-mannered but is more animated and less laconic, and he can be emotional (such as on the occasions when he rails against the "television tyranny" of the New York-based networks) without losing his self-assurance. Both on- and off-camera, he is unassuming.

Self-described as "your ultimate news and information junkie," Lamb reads or scans about nine newspapers a day, many of which he picks up on his arrival at C-SPAN's offices on Capitol Hill each morning between six and eight o'clock, the exact time depending on his schedule for the particular day. According to Rayne Pollack, C-SPAN's former publicist, Lamb "has no hobbies, other than reading books for *Booknotes*." His one conspicuous private extravagance is his Acura Legend automobile. He works long days, seldom takes a vacation, and, eschewing the celebrity network of dinners and parties, is not in the Washington "game." "Money doesn't move him," according to someone who knows him well. "Nothing moves him, except

putting out a good product." Lamb himself has said of his relationship to C-SPAN: "This is my fun. . . . This is my dedication."

Selected Biographical References: *Chicago Tribune* 11 p4 18 '85 por, *Tempo* p1+ Mr 15 '92 por; *N Y Times* 11 p31 11 10 '88 por, B p8 Mr 28 '89 por; *N Y Times Mag* p46+ Mr 15 '92 por; *New Yorker* 70:48+ Mr 14 '94 por; *Sat Eve Post* 257:70+ D 85 pors, 258:46+ Ja/F '86 pors; *Time* 140:29 Ag 24 '92 por



R. R. Jones

Lanting, Frans

July 13, 1951- Photographer. Address: 1985 Smith Grade, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

By immersing himself intellectually, emotionally, and physically in the lives of wild animals ranging from elephants and lions to albatrosses and penguins, the internationally renowned Dutch-born photographer Frans Lanting has captured on film arresting images that illuminate seldom-seen aspects of the natural world and "excit[e] a sense of shared discovery for the viewer, a feeling of seeing a well-known creature as if for the first time," as Steven Werner wrote in *Outdoor Photographer* (May 1993). Lanting's photo-essays "bring to life remote geographic areas . . . and often even create the public image of these landscapes and animals for a worldwide audience," Uta Henschel observed in the German edition of *Geo* (February 1992). His pictures have also been credited with focusing attention on environmental problems and, in some cases, spurring governments and nongov-

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TO: MATT STUMPF
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Thank you for putting this together for C-SPAN's upcoming
20th anniversary celebration, scheduled for Thursday, March 25th.

As we discussed on the phone, our objective is for President Clinton
to be funny, and poke fun a little at us. If he has any other
anecdote that he wants to add, or if you have a few jokes you want
to include, go for it.

Questions...call me at (202) 626-7956 or at home (703) 690-9379.

I appreciate all your help.

Steve

To Brian Lamb...the C-SPAN Board of Directors...
and all of you who work every day to educate the
rest of the country on government, politics and public
policy issues...I want to congratulate you on 20
remarkable years.

I'm sorry I can't be with you in person, but Hillary and
I send our best wishes on C-SPAN's anniversary and
all that you've accomplished since first going on the air
in 1979.

You know, we've both been C-SPAN junkies for quite some
time. And I'm well aware that you folks are unlike
anyone else in the television news business. *→ fans*

I remember being on a call-in program years ago telling
your audience ~~of~~ all that we were doing in Arkansas. On one
of the programs in the mid 1980's one caller even said she
thought I should run for President. At first, I thought it was
my mother phoning in.

C-SPAN is the only network to consider my
one hour, ten minute STATE OF THE UNION Speech
to be a sound bite...

and to televise every minute of the 1995 candidates debates.
Who cares that your candidates were Abraham Lincoln and
Stephen Douglas...and you were 131 years late for the
election?

In Fact.....

C-SPAN is the one network that didn't think my dog,
Buddy, was a lead story... }

But...Thinks my press secretary's daily briefings are a prime
time ratings grabber. When Joe Lockhart informed of
this the other day, he then asked me for a pay raise.

There's always been one question I've always wanted to ask someone at C-SPAN..

How have you been able to get John Glenn to host "BOOKNOTES" every Sunday night....or is that Sen. John McCain who does the program. I get them confused.

By the way, Hillary often reminds me that her book made it on the program before mine.

(Eds note: This is an on-going joke by those who confuse Brian Lamb with McCain / Glenn... the Board and C-SPAN employees will get it.)

With C-SPAN and C-SPAN 2.....you give the president a chance to change channels on Congress...and I like that from time to time.

Congratulations to all of you for 20 years of C-SPAN. From the cable industry, which has been behind your efforts from the beginning... and continues to show it's strong support as their gift to America... and to all 250 employees who keep your networks, your radio station and now your popular web site running... 24 hours a day...7 days a week.

No other country in the world has an information source quite like it.

Since you first went on the air, C-SPAN has provided the rest of us with more than 300-thousand hours of speeches, Congressional hearings, political conventions and thoughtful discussions on the issues of the day.

And it's all the more remarkable because it's done by the private industry, instead of through any government mandate.

C-SPAN is a real American success story.



Happy Anniversary...and my best wishes for your next
20 years.

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Comments:

From: Devin Cragg

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✓
Access No: 03938797 ProQuest Periodical Abstracts
Title: C-SPAN school buses teach students about government
Authors: Abercrombie, Karen L
Journal: Education Week [GEDW] ISSN: 0277-4232 Jnl Group:
Academic
Vol: 18 Iss: 4 Date: Sep 30, 1998 p: 18
Type: Feature Length: Medium Illus: Photograph
Companies: C-SPAN
Subjects: Cable TV; Travel; Education; Federal government
Abstract: Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network (C-SPAN) conducts nationwide tours using the C-SPAN School Bus to get the word out about how C-SPAN can be used to teach students about the federal government.

✓
Access No: 05194901 ProQuest Periodical Abstracts
Title: New Venture for C-Span: All Books, All Weekend
Authors: Carvajal, Doreen
Journal: The New York Times [NYT] ISSN: 0362-4331 Jnl Group:
News
Date: Sep 7, 1998 Sec: C p: 5 col: 1
Type: News Length: Long Illus: Photograph
Companies: C-SPAN
Names: Lamb, Brian
Subjects: Books; Television programming; Television networks
Abstract: Expanding beyond its deadpan gavel-to-gavel coverage of Congress, C-Span is poised to bring similar unfiltered page-to-binding treatment of the publishing industry with the start on Saturday of Book TV, a regular weekend lit-a-thon of programs devoted to just books.
Make that nonfiction titles, said Brian Lamb, chief executive of Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network and the longtime host and low-key interrogator for C-Span's "Book-notes" program, who allows that he has not read any fiction since Tom Wolfe's "Bonfire of the Vanities," which was published 11 years ago.
"We're looking for information; that's the underlying reason for the program," Mr. Lamb said last week while on a swing through New York to film interviews of executives at several top trade publishing houses. "Richness of language - we don't make judgments about that. What we're about is transmitting information. It's hard for us to display beautiful language."
Holdings: Hard Copy, Microform.
Held in OEOB and NEOB Libraries

✓
Access No: 03497943 ProQuest Periodical Abstracts
Title: C-SPAN: From novelty to institution
Authors: Gruenwald, Juliana
Journal: Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report [GCQW] ISSN:
0010-5910 Jnl Group: News; Commentary
Vol: 55 Iss: 47 Date: Nov 29, 1997 p: 2948-2949
Type: Feature Length: Long Illus: Photograph
Companies: C-SPAN
Names: Lamb, Brian
Subjects: Television networks; Politics; History
Abstract: A look at the C-Span's beginnings and its evolution into a
congressional fixture is presented. C-SPAN was begun in 1979 by Brian Lamb.
Holdings: Hard Copy, Microform.
Held in all three libraries

Access No: 03335718 ProQuest Periodical Abstracts
Title: America's town crier
Authors: West, Don; Brown, Sara
Journal: Broadcasting & Cable [BRO] ISSN: 1068-6827 Jnl Group:
Business
Vol: 127 Iss: 30 Date: Jul 21, 1997 p: 70-74
Type: Interview Length: Long Illus: Photograph
Companies: C-SPAN; House of Representatives; Senate
Names: Lamb, Brian
Subjects: Television networks; Television broadcasting; Television
programs; Cable TV; Politics
Abstract: In an interview, Brian Lamb discusses his Sunday night
'Booknotes' interview series on C-SPAN and C-SPAN's 18-year track record of
broadcasts of House and Senate proceedings.
Holdings: Hard Copy.
Held in NEOB Library

Access No: 03317315 ProQuest Periodical Abstracts
Title: See Span bore
Authors: Poundstone, Paula
Journal: Mother Jones [GMOJ] ISSN: 0362-8841 Jnl Group:
Socio/Environmental
Vol: 22 Iss: 4 Date: Jul 1997 p: 80

Companies: Type: Commentary Length: Medium Illus: Photograph
Geo Places: Congress
Subjects: United States; US
Political behavior; Television programming; Federal government

Abstract: Poundstone discusses the difficulty of watching 20 hours of C-SPAN.

Holdings: Hard Copy.
Held in OEOb Library

Access No: 03443671 ProQuest Periodical Abstracts
Title: The C-SPAN Revolution

Reviewers: Foust, James C
Journal: Journalism History [PJOU] ISSN: 0094-7679 Jnl Group: Academic
Vol: 23 Iss: 2 Date: Summer 1997 p: 86-87
Type: Book Review Length: Long

Companies: C-SPAN
Subjects: Nonfiction; Cable TV; Television networks; Television news; Politics

Abstract: Foust reviews 'The C-SPAN Revolution' by Stephen Frantzich and John Sullivan. Favorable book review.

Access No: 02502130 ProQuest Periodical Abstracts
Title: C-SPAN gets pushy: Brian Lamb's channel of record wants it all

Authors: Elving, Ronald D
Journal: Columbia Journalism Review [GCJR] ISSN: 0010-194X Jnl Group: Academic
Vol: 34 Iss: 3 Date: Sep 1995 p: 38-42
Type: Feature Length: Long Illus: Photograph

Companies: C-SPAN
Names: Lamb, Brian
Subjects: Television networks; Executives; Television news; Cable TV

Abstract: C-SPAN pumps out 17,530 hours of public affairs programming annually and is available to 63 million homes. C-SPAN and its founder and chairman Brian Lamb are discussed.

Holdings: Hard Copy, Microform.
Held in OEOb and NEOb Libraries

Access No: 02057451 ProQuest Periodical Abstracts
Title: C-SPAN prepares classroom materials for series on Lincoln-Douglas debates

Authors: DeLoughry, Thomas J
Journal: Chronicle of Higher Education [GCHE] ISSN: 0009-5982 Jrnl Group: Academic
Vol: 40 Iss: 50 Date: Aug 17, 1994 p: A26
Type: News Length: Short

Companies: C-SPAN
Subjects: Cable television industry; Government; Debates; Historical reenactments

Abstract: C-SPAN is beginning a series of re-enactments of the historic Lincoln-Douglas debates, and will offer materials for use in college classes.

Holdings: Hard Copy.
Held in OEOB and NEOB Libraries



Access No: 01890528 ProQuest Periodical Abstracts
Title: The anti-network

Authors: Lardner, James
Journal: New Yorker [GTNY] ISSN: 0028-792X Jrnl Group: Commentary
Vol: 70 Iss: 4 Date: Mar 14, 1994 p: 48-55
Type: Feature Length: Long Illus: Illustration

Companies: C-SPAN
Names: Lamb, Brian
Subjects: Personal profiles; Company profiles; Television news; Cable television industry; Public figures

Abstract: Brian Lamb of C-SPAN lets the news reveal itself without staging, stars or sound bites. In a 15-year period, C-SPAN has altered the nature of politics and has become a model for the diversifying TV news industry.

Holdings: Hard Copy, Microform.
Held in OEOB and NEOB Libraries



Access No: 01159723 ProQuest Periodical Abstracts
Title: Politics in the Raw

Authors: Prato, Lou
Journal: WJR: Washington Journalism Review [PWJR] ISSN:

0149-1172 Jnl Group: Academic
Vol: 14 Iss: 7 Date: Sep 1992 p: 35-38
Type: Feature Length: Long Illus: Photograph

Companies:

C-SPAN

Names:

Lamb, Brian

Subjects:

Television networks; Television news; Personal profiles

Abstract:

The impact of cable TV's C-SPAN network on the US political process is discussed, and the network and founder Chairman Brian Lamb are profiled. In an era of punditry ad absurdum in the media, C-SPAN's unfiltered approach seems to have come into its own.

Holdings:

Hard Copy.

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Access No: 01069911 ProQuest Periodical Abstracts
Title: C-SPAN: Where TV Has Never Gone Before

Authors: Charen, Mona
Journal: Reader's Digest [U S Edition] [GRDI] ISSN: 0034-0375 Jrnl
Group: Lifestyles
Vol: 140 Iss: 841 Date: May 1992 p: 111-115
Type: Feature Length: Long Illus: Photograph

Companies: C-SPAN
Subjects: Company profiles; Television networks; Cable television industry; Government; Mass media

Abstract: C-SPAN has brought viewers into impeachment hearings of judges, into the Canadian Parliament and has broadcast the evening news from the USSR translated into English. The channel has made the workings of the government more accessible to the average person in the US.

Holdings: Hard Copy, Microform.
Held in OEOP Library

Access No: 01036644 ProQuest Periodical Abstracts
Title: No Sound Bites Here

Authors: Meyer, Thomas J
Journal: The New York Times Magazine [NYTM] ISSN: 0028-7822 Jrnl
Group: Commentary
Date: Mar 15, 1992 Sec: 6 p: 46 col: 1
Type: Feature Length: Long Illus: Photograph

Companies: C-SPAN
Names: Lamb, Brian
Subjects: Company profiles; Television news

Abstract: A portrait of the Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network (C-SPAN), and silver-haired chief Brian Lamb's vision of a network that opens up a forum for political thinkers rather than just snatching the most incendiary aspects of their speeches for news clips, is presented.

Holdings: Hard Copy, Microform.
Held in OEOP and NEOP Libraries

Access No: 00908105 ProQuest Periodical Abstracts
Title: Television: C-SPAN

Authors: Hitchens, Christopher
Journal: Vogue [GVOG] ISSN: 0042-8000 Jnl Group: Lifestyles
Vol: 181 Iss: 10 Date: Oct 1991 p: 180-184
Type: Feature Length: Long Illus: Photograph
Companies: C-SPAN
Subjects: Mass media; Television news; Politics
Abstract: A frequent guest on C-SPAN comments on his experiences
with the cable network and its philosophy. His experiences on other political talk
shows are detailed.

- * VIDEO & AUDIO
- * GUIDE TO PROGRAMS
- * C-SPAN IN THE CLASSROOM
- * CONTACT US
- * ABOUT C-SPAN

C-SPAN MISSION
 MILESTONES IN C-SPAN HISTORY
 THE COMPANY
 VIEWING & SCHEDULE TIPS
 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- * SEARCH

- * SHOP C-SPAN

MILESTONES IN C-SPAN HISTORY

March 19, 1979	C-SPAN begins cablecasting the U.S. House of Representatives live to 3.5 million households.
October 7, 1980	C-SPAN adds LIVE Viewer Call-ins to program schedule, providing viewers with direct access to public policy makers.
January 6, 1981	C-SPAN adds gavel-to-gavel coverage of congressional hearings to program schedule.
April 1, 1981	C-SPAN cablecasts daily, eight-hours-a-day.
February 1, 1982	C-SPAN cablecasts daily, 16-hours-a-day.
September 14, 1982	C-SPAN begins 24-hour-a-day programming.
July 1, 1983	C-SPAN begins occasional coverage of the Canadian House of Commons.
February 20, 1984	C-SPAN cablecasts an Iowa caucus live and uninterrupted for the first time.
July/August 1984	C-SPAN cablecasts live, uninterrupted coverage of the Democratic and Republican National Conventions for the first time.
November 1985	C-SPAN cablecasts first live coverage of the Canadian House of Commons.
June 2, 1986	C-SPAN 2 cablecasts live proceedings of the U.S. Senate during television test period.
July 29, 1986	Senate votes in favor of permanent televised coverage of its proceedings.
January 5, 1987	C-SPAN 2 begins 24-hour cablecasting.
November 9, 1988	USIA transmits C-SPAN to 90 countries via World Net, the first global satellite television network.
November 22, 1988	C-SPAN inaugurates international with Queen Elizabeth II's speech to the State opening of Parliament.
March 19, 1989	C-SPAN marks its 10th anniversary.
September 5, 1989	C-SPAN launches Audio Networks, featuring BBC World Service. The

	Audio networks are full time, permanent services.
November 21, 1989	C-SPAN begins regular coverage of the British House of Commons.
June 18, 1990	C-SPAN adds its 50 millionth household.
August 2, 1990	C-SPAN airs 1,124 hours of first-run February 28, 1991 comprehensive public affairs coverage of the Persian Gulf conflict.
January 10-12, 1991	C-SPAN 2 Senate coverage of Persian Gulf - reaches 32.3 million subscribers.
February 19, 1991	C-SPAN begins televising close captioning live proceedings of the U.S. House of Representatives.
June 2, 1991	C-SPAN 2 marks 5th anniversary.
October 11-16, 1991	C-SPAN covers 128 hours of hearings to nominate Judge Clarence Thomas to the U.S. Supreme Court.
November 18, 1991	C-SPAN begins televising close captioning live proceedings of the U.S. Senate.
December 22, 1991	C-SPAN cablecasts exclusive interview with President George Bush at the White House.
January 1992	C-SPAN offers more than 1200 hours of election coverage from January 1992 to November 1992.
January 1993	C-SPAN wins the 8th Annual Golden Cable ACE award, the industry's highest annual honor, for its comprehensive coverage of the presidential election.
May 1993	C-SPAN receives the 1992 Peabody Award for overall excellence by an institution.
November 1, 1993	National launch of the C-SPAN School Bus in Washington, D.C.
December 1993	C-SPAN adds its 60 millionth household.
May 26, 1994	C-SPAN School Bus ends its first (1993-94) tour.
June 1994	C-SPAN and C-SPAN 2 launch on DirecTV.
August-October 1994	C-SPAN covers re-enactments of the Lincoln-Douglas debates in seven Illinois towns.
January 1995	C-SPAN won the 10th Annual Golden Cable ACE award, the industry's

	highest annual honor, for the C-SPAN School Bus.
March 1995	C-SPAN won the Golden Beacon Award for the C-SPAN School Bus, as well as a second Beacon for its customer relations efforts using the Bus.
January 1, 1996	National launch of the second C-SPAN School Bus in Washington, D.C.
May 18, 1996	C-SPAN2 launches About Books, a 5-hour weekend programming block devoted to books, authors and the publishing industry.
June 1996	C-SPAN receives award for programming by the National Education Association.
January 1997	C-SPAN offers Live video web coverage of the House and Senate on the Internet.
May 1997	C-SPAN launches The Alexis de Tocqueville Tour, a nine-month series retracing the steps of the French aristocrat and author of Democracy in America.
June 1997	The C-SPAN School Bus travels to Hawaii, marking the 50th state the Bus has visited since its launch in November of 1993.
September 15, 1997	C-SPAN Extra, the network's third television network, debuts with a focus on live coverage of public affairs events.
October 9, 1997	C-SPAN Radio 90, a 24-hour public affairs radio station serving the Washington-Baltimore market, goes on the air.

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[C-SPAN IN THE CLASSROOM](#) | [CONTACT US](#) | [ABOUT C-SPAN](#) | [SEARCH](#) | [SHOP C-SPAN](#)

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Access No: 72847019980907 ProQuest - The New York Times (R) Ondisc
Title: New Venture for C-Span: All Books, All Weekend
Authors: Doreen Carvajal
Source: New York Times, Late Edition (East Coast)
Date: Sep 7, 1998 Sec: C Business/Financial Desk p: 5
Length: Medium (834 words) Type: News
Subjects: Books; Television programming; Television networks
Names: Lamb, Brian
Companies: C-SPAN

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Article Text:

Expanding beyond its deadpan gavel-to-gavel coverage of Congress, C-Span is poised to bring similar unfiltered page-to-binding treatment of the publishing industry with the start on Saturday of Book TV, a regular weekend lit-a-thon of programs devoted to just books.

Make that nonfiction titles, said Brian Lamb, chief executive of Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network and the longtime host and low-key interrogator for C-Span's 'Book-notes' program, who allows that he has not read any fiction since Tom Wolfe's 'Bonfire of the Vanities,' which was published 11 years ago.

'We're looking for information; that's the underlying reason for the program,' Mr. Lamb said last week while on a swing through New York to film interviews of executives at several top trade publishing houses. 'Richness of language -- we don't make judgments about that. What we're about is transmitting information. It's hard for us to display beautiful language.'

This is, after all, a nonprofit public affairs network -- subsidized by the cable industry -- although some of the books featured on the programs seem to obliterate the line between fact and fiction.

'House Mouse, Senate Mouse,' for example, is a children's storybook that describes the intense legislative effort to designate a national cheese, which ends happily passing under the scrutiny of the Squeaker of the House and President Mouse.

The book's authors, Peter Barnes, the CNBC broadcaster, and his wife, Cheryl Shaw Barnes, will be interviewed by a 9-year-old guest host, Sherryl Grant, whose day job is a fourth-grade pupil at Robert Brent Elementary School in Washington.

'We're trying to appeal to a younger age group,' said Mr. Lamb, who says that C-Span will be able to experiment with such programming because it does not measure success by viewer ratings. In fact, it doesn't measure them at all.

C-Span does reach 73 million households on its primary channel and 50.4 million on its sister channel, C-Span2, which will be showing the book programming.

C-Span, which accepts no contributions, is spending more than \$1.1 million to start

Book TV with eight employees who will create programming to run from 8 A.M. Saturday to 8 A.M. Monday. The schedule is still evolving, but it will include programs exploring the business of publishing along with interviews of authors, panel discussions, bookstore tours and literary events like book signings and regional festivals.

'We may never have a way to judge if it is a success other than if we get feedback from teachers who are telling us that they're using it,' Mr. Lamb said of the project. So instead, he judges success by the customer in a Manhattan cafe who gives him a thumbs-up sign. Or he measures his impact by the sales of his collection of interviews with authors, which is now in its seventh printing with 35,000 copies in print.

Mr. Lamb, a native of Lafayette, Ind., wears a dark jacket and an understated print tie. He likes to cast himself as an average reader with no intellectual pretensions and a curiosity for substantive information. (Although, in his youth he was the host of a Lafayette television show that would now seem a little frivolous by C-Span standards: 'Dance Date.')

To prepare for interviewing authors, he said, he marks up and reads at least 75 percent of each book featured on the show. And on the basis of this expansive reading list, he makes one of his few judgments: Many books, he said, are too long.

C-Span, which started its 'Book-notes' interview programs in the late 1980's, has long had a habit of zigging in different directions from the book coverage of commercial networks. As Mr. Lamb notes with some pride, C-Span maintained the sanctity of an O. J. Simpson-literature free zone.

On the Book TV format, Mr. Lamb said, there will be no interviews with authors debating the latest twists of the JonBenet Ramsey case. Instead, the programs' producers will be seeking authors of perennial backlist books, which may have been published 10 years earlier, or 'nonbestselling authors' who sell in modest numbers common to the industry -- 5,000 copies or less.

'One of the reasons why we're doing Book TV is that I've learned that you've got to be different,' Mr. Lamb said.

Mr. Lamb said Book TV's cameras would soon start tracking neighborhood reading clubs, quirky independent stores and personal home libraries. Last week, a film crew was wandering the Great Hall of the Library of Congress. And, of course, Book TV will continue to feature authors who are willing to open themselves up to Mr. Lamb's calm, relentlessly neutral questioning.

'We're looking to create an environment that's not frantic,' Mr. Lamb said. 'It's not meant to be confrontational. It's meant to be substantive, conversational.'

Caption:

Tom Baldwin, owner of a West Chester, Pa., bookstore, discussing the business. (Bill Lyons/C-Span); Richard Hall of C-Span shooting advance footage of the main reading room in the Great Hall of the Library of Congress in Washington for the new Book TV series. (Carl T. Powers for The New York Times)

POLITICS

In the Raw

***In an era of punditry
and absurdum, C-SPAN's
unfiltered approach
comes into its own.***

BY LOU PRATO



C-SPAN founder and Chairman Brian Lamb, left, with Newsweek foreign correspondent John Barry.

Shortly after noon on Monday, March 19, 1979, a 30-year-old, second-term congressman from Tennessee named Al Gore began speaking from the podium on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Gore's speech was the first ever to be televised live from Congress by a newly-created, upstart cable service called Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network, C-SPAN for short. Making note of the historic event, Gore said that "television will change this institution" and has "the potential...to revitalize representative democracy."

Some C-SPAN devotees consider those words prophetic. They argue that the cable network's innovative, sometimes relentlessly bland "you are there" coverage of politics and public affairs is having an impact on the political process and shaping political careers.

For example, some speculate that Gore's frequent appearances on C-SPAN throughout the 1980s may have nourished his own political ambitions, contributing to his successful Senate bid in 1984, his run for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1988, and culminating this year with his vice presidential nomination.

Others downplay C-SPAN's influence, but extoll its civic and journalis-

tic virtues. "There have been no fundamental changes in the institution or the way Congress works," says Michael Robinson, a professor of media and politics at Georgetown University. "C-SPAN is like a library. Libraries do not change the way the world works but they are a real plus for information needed to do that."

C-SPAN's impact on the political process can be debated ad infinitum, but people *are* talking. And in a television era critics say is marked by seven-second sound bites and celebrity broadcast journalism, an unlikely programming idea has found a faithful following.

Ask Washington media executives about C-SPAN and the superlatives begin to flow.

NBC's Vice President and Bureau Chief Tim Russert calls C-SPAN "the video resource of record."

"It complements us and supplements us," says ABC's Vice President and Washington Bureau Chief George Watson.

"I love it," says Chuck Lewis, Washington bureau chief of Hearst newspapers. "I know there are a lot of people in the business like me who go home after dealing with public policy issues all day and we're tired and want a break, yet we turn on C-SPAN to see if there's something we missed.... It's a terrific concept that brings us 'inside-the-Beltway' types smack into reality with the public outside of Washington."

The man who created C-SPAN, Chairman Brian Lamb, never thought it would become popular or influential. "I was simply trying to get the cable industry to do a public service by showing, in an impartial way, what makes the government tick," Lamb says.

WGR

It didn't hurt that Lamb's idea coincided with the growth of cable, satellites and electronic video technology. Only 19 percent of the nation's homes were wired for cable when C-SPAN began. Today, 61 percent have cable and C-SPAN has a potential audience of 150 million viewers. Because C-SPAN does not carry advertising, it does not subscribe to the Nielsen ratings that other networks use to determine the number of people watching.

While some contend that C-SPAN's loyal viewers are a small elite of political junkies, Lamb and others point out that that translates into an audience of opinion leaders and citizens who care about politics. He cites a survey by Statistical Research Inc. that found 74 percent of C-SPAN viewers voted in the 1990 November elections, compared to only 36 percent of all eligible voters.

That kind of following could be important, especially in this election year when C-SPAN has provided sweeping coverage of state-by-state primary elections, gavel-to-gavel coverage of the Republican and Democratic conventions (at a time when the networks reduced coverage), as well as continued televising of the House and Senate proceedings and sundry other political events.

Some say that during the Democratic and Republican primaries, C-SPAN was more thorough, insightful and innovative than the networks and CNN. That view was reflected in a recent Newsweek "Conventional Wisdom Watch." The author chided the networks for "pundit overload" adding, "Honey, find C-SPAN so we can see what's really going on."

Bill Small, former president of NBC News, a long-time CBS News executive and now dean of the Graduate School of Business at Fordham University, says C-SPAN's 1992 primary coverage was "fantastic.... If anyone had watched C-SPAN and nothing else they would have had a better sense of the campaign and issues than ever."

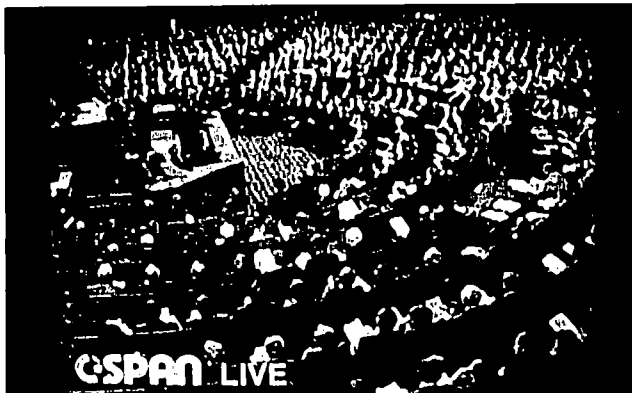
C-SPAN does have detractors. Some complain that its programs drone on and on. Others criticize its uncelebrated talk show hosts for not being more critical when questioning guests. Lloyd Grove of the Washington Post, for example, berated Lamb, whom he called "a usually deft and pointed interviewer," for seeming "cowed" and pitching "one softball after another" in an interview last February with former President Richard Nixon.

"I pitch everyone softballs," Lamb

responds facetiously.

Visitors to C-SPAN's bustling suite of offices and studios near Capitol Hill can only imagine what it was like in the early days. In 1979, Lamb and his four employees operated out of a small barren room in suburban Virginia, near Washington's National Airport. They shared space with Cablevision magazine—in a building without cable reception.

"Brian couldn't see [the House proceedings]," chuckles Brian Lockman,



C-SPAN got its start providing live coverage of the House of Representatives.

then the sole technician and now vice president of network operations. "He'd call me on the Hill and ask, 'What's going on now? Who's speaking and what's he saying?' For six months we just took the House feed. We didn't own a single camera, microphone or tape machine. When we did our first news conference off the House floor, and later, for our 'Close-Up' shows, we hired an independent crew."

Those days were not easy, with Lamb fighting the political bureaucracy, network condescension and even the cable industry itself for acceptance. It took him four years to convince a couple of bold cable system owners to begin funding his idea, and another two years to negotiate with reluctant House leaders before the first camera was turned on.

Speaker of the House Thomas "Tip" O'Neill didn't always support television in the House chambers. But sensing that it might improve the image of members and show the House as the dominant branch of Congress, he approved "the experiment" as long as he controlled the cameras and dictated terms. The networks, which wanted their own cameras on the House floor, whined about journalistic independence and accused Lamb and C-SPAN of being government tools. (Even now, Lamb says, "a lot of people believe we are part of the government. Many House and Senate members

think they own us.") When C-SPAN began covering congressional hearings in the early 1980s, some members of Congress refused to allow its cameras in the hearing rooms. Some network personnel, meanwhile, tried to sabotage coverage by invoking union rules and intimidating the young C-SPAN technicians. "They were both trying to protect their own turfs," says Mike Michaelson, a C-SPAN vice president, now semi-retired.

Lamb calls Michaelson "the best hire I ever made," and for good reason: Michaelson, who had worked for years in the Senate and House radio-TV galleries, is credited with guiding C-SPAN through the labyrinth of power on Capitol Hill and the bitter trench warfare with the networks.

"The networks were tougher," Michaelson says. "They didn't think we were a bona fide news organization."

George Watson was ABC News' Washington bureau chief during most of this period. "There's always a problem with the new kid on the block," he

says. "We were resentful. It was the same thing with CNN." Watson says his only criticism of C-SPAN now is its boast of being a nonprofit organization. The network may be nonprofit as a business, he says, but it is subsidized by a for-profit cable industry.

It's the network's direct link to the cable industry that disturbs C-SPAN's harshest critics. "C-SPAN has done a great job in everything but the cable policy arena," says Jeff Chester, co-director of the Center for Media Education, a public interest group in Washington that focuses on media policy. "It does a terrible job at covering cable issues and rarely does it have any guests on the call-in or interview shows who are critical of the cable industry. It's been a P.R. bonanza for the cable industry, but its avoidance of issues critical of the industry has been shameful."

Lamb vigorously disputes that charge, pointing out that C-SPAN is frequently prohibited from covering congressional hearings on cable legislation. "I get accused of being a shill for the cable industry," he says, "but that's baloney. No one from the cable industry has tried to influence our programming. And there is no order here not to cover industry issues. Yes, we are solely owned, funded and operated by the industry, but we are strictly a public service."

The confusion over ownership has persisted even as C-SPAN has over-

come the initial mistrust and has prospered. To carry the two services, C-SPAN and C-SPAN 2, cable companies pay monthly fees based on their number of subscribers. In 13 years, C-SPAN's budget has swelled from \$400,000 to \$18 million—a big jump, but still paltry when compared with other networks.

Four years after its humble beginning, C-SPAN became a 24-hour service in 1983. In June 1986, C-SPAN 2 was created to cover the Senate. "They got tired of seeing the House on television in their offices and of the visibility and popularity of House members," says Lamb.

Although C-SPAN carries House and Senate floor proceedings in their entirety, they provide only 15 percent

of the network's programming. The rest is filled with hearings, press conferences, seminars and telephone call-in shows. The service carries many events live and repeats them several times.

Because the House and Senate do not always keep to a precise schedule, there are few regularly scheduled programs. These are usually telephone call-in shows aired daily before the congressional day begins and after it ends. "Events in the News" on Monday morning and "Journalists' Roundtable" on Friday morning are two regular programs featuring journalists. Another is Sunday evening's "Book Notes" an interview program with authors. In addition, every Saturday night it airs "America and the Courts," a half-hour program examining the judicial system. On Fri-

days and Sundays it airs "The Road to the White House," 90 minutes that include "video vérité" campaign coverage.

In selecting what it covers and how, C-SPAN's prime objective, according to its mission statement, is to be balanced and impartial in its format and content. Toward that end it hired a communications professor as an outside consultant to help maintain impartiality in everything from camera angles to audience close-ups.

Any employee can make suggestions about where to send the cameras. Each week three different producers attend the daily editorial meeting to "increase the diversity of opinion," says Program Director Terry Murphy. "Everyone at that meeting has equal weight," says Political Edi-

The Man Behind C-SPAN

In person C-SPAN creator Brian Lamb is friendly and likable. But as the network's best-known on-camera interviewer, he is often criticized for his lack of emotion on the air. Some have gone so far as to suggest that Lamb, like C-SPAN, has no personality at all. Thomas J. Meyer, in a complimentary New York Times magazine article, wrote that Lamb "has all the charisma of a test pattern. And none of the color." And in *Mirabella* magazine last year, Walter Kirn wrote: "Lamb is a video Buddha, television's most stationary being. His body, his desk and his chair are one."



Brian Lamb

Yet, Lamb's vision for public affairs programming is what has made C-SPAN a success. That vision can be traced to his Midwestern roots and his early exposure to politics. It's a legacy that goes back to a short tavern owner in Lafayette, Indiana, who made people laugh by dancing with a full glass of beer on his bald head.

"That was my grandfather, old Pete," Lamb recalls with a smile. "My dad was one of his seven kids and he used to talk about old Pete and what he had to do to keep the tavern going, including gambling in the backroom and payoffs to politicians."

Lamb's father, Bill, ran the tavern for a while, then became a wholesale beer distributor. "I watched my dad all his life crossing the palm of politicians on the left and right just to keep his distributor's license," says Lamb. "He worked his whole life to clean up the corrupt system. He had this love-hate relationship with the politicians. He loved them because they were interesting people and hated them because they always had their hands out."

Lamb has long maintained that he is nonpartisan, a claim not readily believed by everyone. Some have been suspicious of Lamb's work on the Nixon-Agnew campaign in 1967, in the Nixon White House and on the staff of then-Colorado Republican Sen. Peter Dominick. But Lamb also worked as a low-level military aide in the Lyndon Johnson White House. In addition, he has been a reporter for UPI radio and Cablevision magazine.

"I've never been a member of a political party nor have I ever contributed to any party," says Lamb. "Certainly, being from Indiana I was not raised in a liberal environment."

While much of the suspicion has dissipated, Lamb's Republican background caused tremors when he first proposed that C-SPAN be created to televise the proceedings of the House of Representatives in 1977. He bristles when recalling the sarcastic comments of CBS commentator Andy Rooney and others at a roast for Walter Cronkite during the the Society of Professional Journalists' 1985 convention.

"Rooney attacked me personally," Lamb recalls. "He said, 'Brian Lamb worked for the Nixon-Agnew White House and we know what Nixon and Agnew thought of the First Amendment.'"

In fact, Lamb says his experience with the Nixon-Agnew campaign increased his cynicism about the political process. In 1967, Lamb was a field representative in the Midwest for "United Citizens for Nixon-Agnew." His main task was to tape-record voter comments about political and social issues. At the end of each week the tape was dispatched to Washington where, Lamb assured the participants, the candidates would listen to it.

"I was naive and gullible enough to think this was an honest effort," Lamb says. "Later I was told all the tapes...were edited down to an hour that Nixon and Agnew heard—which was a total lie."

"I vowed that if I ever could, I would go back to the community and go on the street corner and ask people what they really thought about Nixon, Agnew and anything else.... That was the origin of the call-in programs that are now the strength of C-SPAN."

To maintain his avowed neutrality, Lamb says he avoids the Washington party circuit. "There is a certain point in this town when people connect and suddenly you become really important," he says. "But there's a danger there because then people are constantly questioning your motives. And to be perfectly blunt, serving the needs of this town is not important because we're here to serve the needs of the general public."

—L.P.

tor Steve Scully. "Control room producers and technicians have as much say as Terry."

C-SPAN tends to focus on Washington, but it also ventures outside the Beltway. Recently, it covered the presidential conventions and the National Governors Association convention in Princeton.

C-SPAN also airs international fare, such as a regular Sunday night feature in which Great Britain's prime minister fields questions from members of Parliament. It also airs translated newscasts from Russia. On Memorial Day weekend, it broadcast 30 hours of original footage from an April trip to Vietnam when C-SPAN accompanied a Senate delegation looking into the controversy over remaining POWs and MIAs. The program went beyond that issue in its sweeping look at the country almost 20 years after the war.

Perhaps the network's most distinctive characteristic is its thoroughness. It carried every minute of the days-long Iran-contra, Keating Five and Clarence Thomas hearings, usually live.

Because there are no commercials, C-SPAN uses the lulls and recesses during those and other hearings to obtain immediate viewer reaction by telephone.

The shows give viewers the opportunity to talk directly to prominent members of government and the media, and the phones never stop ringing.

"They're not afraid to tell you what they think," says Lamb. "I've gotten my share of criticism and that's the beauty of it. People feel they're being heard and treated with respect."

Rayne Pollack, C-SPAN's manager of press relations, says the service, and particularly the call-in shows, are popular because "[C-SPAN] is more like the print media—the same way USA Today is more like television. It expects a level of concentration and participation from its viewers that you don't get from the networks, where you're zapped with blurbs and sound bites."

To help viewers understand how news decisions are made, C-SPAN covers editorial meetings at publications such as USA Today, the Wall Street Journal, Time magazine and the Los Angeles Times. It also has gone backstage at television stations. Earlier this year, C-SPAN's cameras went to the newsroom of WMUR-TV in Manchester, New Hampshire, when the primaries were in full swing in that state. However, some news organizations—including the New York Times and the Washington Post—have refused to let

**"Journalists incur
a lot of wrath from
viewers who believe
they're all part of
the Washington
establishment,"
says Sarah Trahern.**

C-SPAN inside their editorial meetings, perhaps for good reason. Editors at Knight-Ridder's Washington bureau were embarrassed in April when they allowed C-SPAN to cover their morning story conference. One of the stories discussed was the court-ordered delay of the execution of convicted killer Robert Alton Harris in California. As the seven senior editors talked about the case, it was obvious that they didn't know Harris had died in the gas chamber more than an hour earlier.

Lamb is particularly rankled by the fact that the Times and the Post won't allow television cameras in their newsrooms.

"Journalists have probably been the most difficult people for access," he says. "The closest we got at the Times was [former Managing Editor] Seymour Topping's office. And our experience at the Post was worse. We were doing an interview with Ben Bradlee as he was retiring as editor and had permission from the P.R. folk to show the newsroom while we talked. But a high editor of the Post came over, put his hands over the lens and pushed the cameraman away. It was quite a scene."

C-SPAN also has been banned from several Washington events, including the annual Gridiron Dinner, which brings together Washington's political and media elite for an evening of off-the-record jokes and satire.

Many journalists, however, are eager to appear on the channel, particularly on the "Journalists' Roundtable." Sarah Trahern, senior call-in producer, schedules at least eight journalists a week. Appearances are restricted to once every three or four months.

It's not always a pleasant experience. "Journalists incur a lot of wrath from viewers who believe they're all part of the Washington establishment," says Trahern.

Public anger over the House Bank scandal was especially intense, Trahern says, and directed at journalists as well as politicians. She remembers in particular viewer confrontations with Dan Thomasson of Scripps-Howard and Marianne Means of Hearst. "It got a little personal. They got tough calls about being in with the government...and being too cozy with the politicians."

The pervasive negative perception of Washington journalists was summed up recently by an anonymous viewer who phoned in to another show. She told moderator Kathy Buckley and Denver Post correspondent Bob Kowalski, "Thanks to C-SPAN, I've learned the press isn't too bright."

C-SPAN continues to look for ways to expand and improve coverage. Susan Swain, senior vice president, heads "C-SPAN 2000," a project to determine how the cable service will change over the next decade.

"We have been asked to come up with a 10-year plan in everything from technology and programming to human resources and financial planning," Swain says. "Most of our employees are under 35 with college degrees.... We have to figure out a way to keep them challenged."

Among the network's goals is to take its cameras inside the Supreme Court, a move the justices have resisted. Lamb says it's ironic that "our cameras got inside the Kremlin before our own Supreme Court."

As for now, if there is any lingering doubt about how far C-SPAN has come since its simple beginning, it was dispelled early in the New Hampshire primary campaign last January. The cast of "Saturday Night Live" did a skit satirizing C-SPAN and its lackluster style. Some of the biggest laughs came at the expense of the comedian who portrayed Brian Lamb as a colorless, dull interviewer.

A sign of arrival, yes. But given C-SPAN's success, Lamb will most likely have the last laugh. ●

Lou Prato, a WJR contributing writer, is director of broadcasting for the Medill News Service in Washington, D.C.

ANNALS OF THE MEDIA

THE ANTI-NETWORK

Brian Lamb and C-SPAN let the news reveal itself—without staging, stars, or sound bites. While mainstream TV news has become increasingly high-cost and down-market, over the last fifteen years C-SPAN has altered the nature of politics and is setting a new tone for a diversifying industry.

BY JAMES LARDNER

TO think of TV news these days is to think of NBC proving that a General Motors pickup truck will explode on impact if you shoot flames at the gas tank; of ABC finding the means (when the networks have all but given up on documentaries) to do an hour-long special and five segments of "PrimeTime Live" on the Menendez case; and of CBS stationing Connie Chung (and her "CBS Evening News" anchor desk) in Portland for two weeks while she pursued her "exclusive network interview" with Tonya Harding. It is enough to make an old network-news loyalist weep, as Dan Rather nearly did during an industry conclave last September, when he took his colleagues and himself to task for allowing "this great instrument, this resource, this weapon for good, to be squandered and cheapened." And then you catch sight of the Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network.

"What is this doing on my TV set?" is a question that enters the mind of a viewer who has just made the leap. C-SPAN, as it is commonly known, is TV news without stars, computer graphics, or throbbing music (to say nothing of commercial interruptions), and its idea of a hot story is welfare reform. There are actually two networks: C-SPAN, which carries the House of Representatives, and C-SPAN2, which carries the Senate—when those bodies are in session. The rest of the time, the programming on both C-SPANS consists of speeches, symposia, and press conferences (presented, as a rule, in their entirety, down to the last burp), and of interviews, call-in shows, and strange, Warholian studies of people and institutions having some connection with the great enterprise of government—two hours, say, of the new American Am-

bassador to Mexico, James R. Jones, and his wife, Olivia, arriving in Mexico City, making their first official inspection of the Embassy, and scrutinizing a vast hall known as "the barn," where hundreds of Mexican nationals have come to apply for visas. (Mrs. Jones: "Sometimes the lines actually go into the street?" Consul-General: "Oh, sometimes the lines go one, two, three blocks down, another block, and in back of the Embassy again." Mrs. Jones: "It gets pretty warm in here." Punctilious Aide: "It certainly can be in summer.")

No other network, perhaps, has done so little to call attention to itself. And yet, fifteen years after its launching, C-SPAN is in sixty million homes; millions of Americans watch it regularly (its known fans include Bill Clinton, Mario Cuomo, Rush Limbaugh, and Barbra Streisand); it has been parodied by "Saturday Night Live" and David Letterman; and, in its low-intensity way, it has changed both television and politics.

C-SPAN watchers are the kind of people who give money to politicians they like, and send angry Mailgrams to ones they don't like; and they are no less fervent in their commitment to the network itself. On the call-in shows—a regular weekday feature—it is common for people of widely differing political orientations to pause, like members of rival gangs who worship at the same church, for a brief "Thank you for C-SPAN" before launching into the not so polite main body of their remarks.

The recipient of the thanks, often, is a man in his early fifties, on the short side, with thinning silvery hair, a moonlike face, bright blue eyes, and a wide mouth, which on these occasions curves into a measured smile—the only expression of on-air emotion he permits himself. Brian Lamb, who usually

handles the Monday- and Friday-morning call-ins, and also a Sunday-night author-interview show called "Booknotes," is one of the network's most engaging oddities. There is something monkish about his appearance, and he practices an austere brand of reporting and interviewing. He doesn't chat. He doesn't philosophize. Just when everyone in journalism has agreed that objectivity is a snare and a delusion, Lamb refuses to convey the slightest hint of his own views, or even whether he has any.

Lamb has been criticized in print for not "challenging" people; indeed, that is one of his trademarks. He didn't press the writer Christopher Hitchens when, appearing on "Booknotes" to discuss a collection of his essays, he denounced Mother Teresa as someone who is "forever on some scumbag's Learjet going around cashing in on everyone else's belief that she's a saint." Nor, in an interview shown later the same evening, did Lamb question President Clinton when he spoke of his great admiration for Mother Teresa. Which portrayal to believe? Lamb, listening with the same stony detachment to both men, was no help.

Just when you have forgotten that Lamb is there, however, he has a habit of reappearing with a question that nobody else would have thought to ask. "Have you read all that?" he inquired after President Clinton described an impressive bunch of books on a side table in the Oval Office. (The answer seemed to be not exactly, or not yet, although Clinton moved on so briskly to a discussion of other books and other activities that it was hard to be sure.)

Within the community of "C-SPAN junkies," as viewers tend to call themselves, Lamb has developed a follow-



"The king says no dice on the gift-and-souvenir-shop concept."

ing—a sort of cult of impersonality. "I sit here morning after morning trying to figure out if you're a Republican or a Democrat," a woman from New Hampshire announced after reaching him on a call-in show a few months ago. "Really? Oh," Lamb replied. Like one of those laconic Western heroes who deliberately settle down in places where nobody knows them, Lamb attracts attention by his nonpursuit of it. He has never done a "standup" outside the White House or the Capitol. He has never jockeyed with the President at a White House press conference. In fifteen years as a TV journalist covering Washington, he has never spoken his own name on the air. Nor has he bothered to mention that in addition to his on-camera duties he is C-SPAN's chairman and chief executive officer and the man who thought up the idea for the network in the first place.

LIKE Brian Lamb the host-interviewer, Brian Lamb the chairman of C-SPAN can generally be found wearing a charcoal suit, a striped tie, and an impeccably pressed white shirt. In temperament, though, the two Lambs are

easy to keep straight. The host stays rooted to his chair. The chairman likes to walk around and can sometimes be seen karate-chopping the air as he roams the halls. The host is a man of few words. The chairman is rather chatty. The host is all but unflappable. The chairman is capable of getting riled up.

A subject much on Lamb's mind at present is the recent decision of the Federal Communications Commission—implementing the Cable Television Consumer Protection and Competition Act of 1992—to cut cable rates by about seven per cent, having already taken a bite out of the industry's revenues through a complex set of "must carry" rules that give broadcast stations the right to claim access to cable systems. Lamb sees this series of actions as a "baffling" and "incredibly punitive" assault on cable TV, just when "true competition was at the doorstep" in the form of new satellite and telephone-wire delivery systems and a vast expansion of the cable universe through fibre optics and digitization. C-SPAN is a nonprofit service that gets its financing in fees from cable systems around the country,

and it has suffered, according to Lamb, both indirectly, because of the "tremendous bitterness" of the industry and the conviction of its "good people" that their public-spiritedness has gone unappreciated by Congress, and more directly, through the must-carry rules, which have created a channel-capacity squeeze and caused system managers to look for programming to unload. Roughly two and a half million Americans have experienced cutbacks in, or the loss of, C-SPAN as a result; what they have got instead, Lamb told me, are things "that no one is asking for"—such as the opportunity, in Steubenville, Ohio, to choose among five different public-television stations.

"Wacko!" is Lamb's thumbnail assessment of the Cable Act. "Congress has created two classes of communicators," he said. "If you come in over the traditional airwaves, you can demand to be carried. If you come in over the satellite, you have no rights at all. I keep waiting for someone to explain to me how all this is benefitting the public."

Having ascertained that Lamb is a man with his share of opinions, I asked him if he didn't find it difficult to strip down mentally for his appearances in front of the camera. (I envisioned an elaborate, Zen-like rite of purification.) He shook his head. "It's not hard," he assured me. "You'd be surprised." There have been a few times over the years when, by his own standards, he has lost control. During the 1992 Republican Convention, in Houston, a woman called one day to complain that, as Lamb reconstructs it, she had been seeing and hearing rather too many Republicans. "She really teed off at me, and I teed right back at her," Lamb told me. To be more precise, he permitted himself to suggest that if the caller found something about the program displeasing she might consider . . . *changing channels*. Lamb was so disgusted with himself over this outburst that he left Houston that day, assigning others to fulfill his remaining interviewing commitments, and took himself off the air for the next two weeks.

If it is hard to figure Brian Lamb in the bright and perky world of TV newspeople, it is no easier to figure him in the fast-talking, flamboyant fraternity of media pioneers. He has no grand theory of the technological past and fu-

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ture. Ask him what might appear to be a complicated or a profound question about TV or TV news—an invitation to a lofty discourse—and he answers with a couple of sentences that, syntactically, might have come out of the mouth of Gary Cooper.

Why are there no tight closeups on C-SPAN? "If you were sitting in a room with someone, you wouldn't run up and peer into his eyes." Why did C-SPAN, in its coverage of last spring's gay-and-lesbian march on Washington, include the raunchy scenes and off-color language that every other TV network left on the cutting-room floor? "We think people should have a chance to see the whole thing and make up their own mind." Why do C-SPAN's various moderators and interviewers (beginning with Lamb himself) seem so subdued—as if they had taken downers, or everyone else had taken uppers? "I was in Indiana watching the news with a friend of mine, and the guy came on and said, 'Hi, I'm Jeff Smith. Karen Jones isn't here tonight.' That's what they're into—people, ratings, and all that. They care about Karen Jones more than the news. Day in and day out, they build the personality. We decide every day not to."

Of course, Lamb is not the first person to question the value of stars in TV news. On this subject, as on others, his originality lies not so much in his analysis of the problem as in the bloodhoundlike way he pursues the logic of that analysis far beyond the point where everyone else has abandoned it. By C-SPAN decree, the first person you see at the beginning of a show is always a guest rather than the host, and the interviewers are under instructions to keep their questions brief; and, even more shockingly, on-camera work is supplementary duty for employees whose main responsibilities lie elsewhere. (One regular C-SPAN interviewer, Susan Swain, is a senior vice-president in charge of programming; another, Bruce Collins, is the network's legal counsel.) By these and other methods, Lamb has created the world's first star-proof news organization.

Steve Scully, C-SPAN's White House producer, used to cover politics for a local news show in Rochester, New York. Things got bad for him on his old job, he told me, when a consulting firm was brought in to liven up the show. "They

told you how to dress, how to comb your hair, what kind of makeup to wear, what kind of ties to wear, how to interact with the other anchors," Scully recalled. "They even told you how to smile. That's one of the nice things about C-SPAN: there's no one telling us how to smile."

WHEN I first called up C-SPAN to inquire about the possibility of interviewing Lamb, the network's publicist, Rayne Pollack, cautioned me not to ask about his personal life. She soon made it apparent that, as forbidden territory goes, we were discussing a very modest piece of real estate. Lamb gets to work early (by six o'clock when he is doing a morning show; by seven-thirty or eight on other days). He has a long-term girlfriend—a corporate lobbyist—with whom he shares a town house in Arlington, Virginia, but he has never been married and has no children. "He doesn't play golf," Pollack said. "He doesn't have a dog. He doesn't run. He doesn't cook. He has no hobbies, other than reading books for 'Booknotes.'" Naturally, I didn't take these claims on faith; an investigation was called for. Now, having probed the darkest corners of the Brian Lamb story, I can report that he was the kind of boy who, in the words of one old friend, "never missed a day in school"; that he used to be known as the Doo, because of a perceived resemblance to Howdy Doody; and that (in what was perhaps the most *outré* episode in his past) he worked his way through Purdue University as a disk jockey, and between his junior and senior years created an "American Bandstand"-style TV show, called "Dance Date," which had a brief run on a local station.

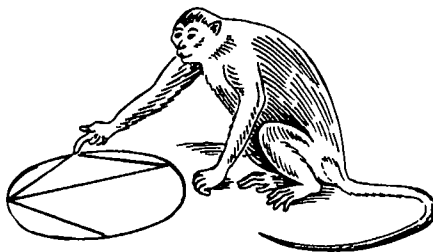
Lamb spent the first twenty-two years of his life in Lafayette, Indiana, where his father was a tavern owner turned beer distributor. After getting a degree in speech from Purdue—the home-town university—he drifted

around for a while, entered the Navy, spent two years at sea, and in 1966 was sent to Washington to be a Pentagon press officer.

At the Pentagon, Lamb became acquainted with the world of TV news. The mid-sixties were a time of troubled relations between the press and the military, and people were expected to make clear choices. You were for our troops or you weren't. You were for the First Amendment or you weren't. Lamb was only twenty-four when he got to Washington, but he was a very serious twenty-four, and he regarded both sides with a cool eye.

One day, a network correspondent was shooting a piece about a group of young antiwar protesters from Connecticut who had camped out in a Pentagon entrance. Prior to his appearance, they were as passive as could be. "They were literally lying on the floor," Lamb says. "Then, the minute the camera started rolling, the kids got up, the placards came out, and they yelled and screamed, 'Stop the war! Stop the war!'" The reporter was having trouble with his delivery, and Lamb watched in astonishment as—by unspoken agreement between the demonstrators and the news crew—the lying-down-and-jumping-up routine repeated itself with each take. "I thought, Gee, this is interesting—I'm going to watch it on the evening news," Lamb recalls. "And there it was, these kids screaming and shouting, when the truth was they had never screamed or shouted on their own. They had come peacefully. Nice kids."

Stuck on television, Lamb got a job as assistant manager of a TV station in Indiana after an honorable discharge from the Navy, in 1967. But Lamb was stuck on Washington as well, and he returned there a year later, becoming, successively, a radio reporter for United Press International; press secretary to a Republican senator from Colorado, Peter H. Dominick; and, in 1971, a spokesman for the Office of Telecommunications Policy, under Richard Nixon. The name Nixon is a sensitive one for a journalist to have on his résumé, and Lamb is prickly about the notion that, as he puts it, "if you worked in the Nixon Administration you must be a hatchet murderer." Yet he also says that, in retrospect, the work of the telecommunications office—attempting



to bring competition and diversity to a highly regulated and monopolistic field—was poisoned by the Nixon White House's campaign of intimidation against what it saw as hostile elements in the media.

Moral considerations aside, the telecommunications office was a place to learn about the technology and the economics of television—about duplexing, multiplexing, parabolic dishes, transponders, pole rights, and the dawning of what was called "the wired nation." By the time Lamb left the office, in May of 1974, he had conceived a plan for what Henry Goldberg, one of his colleagues there—now a communications lawyer and still a close friend—describes as "a network that relied on the alternative media of cable and satellite to bring Washington into people's homes."

Lamb took a job as the Washington bureau chief of a trade magazine, *Cablevision*, and in his spare time he began trying to mobilize support among cable operators for his venture. His argument was a high-minded one, according to Robert Titsch, Sr., who was his boss at *Cablevision* and an early backer of his plans. "Brian was driven by the dream," Titsch recalls. "He felt that the American public was getting screwed by television. He felt that the government—the most powerful government in the world—was hidden from its constituents, and that people should see it." By providing such a service, Lamb pointed out, cable would be announcing to the nation that it intended to be something more than a clone of the networks.

As it turned out, many of the nation's cable-system operators had no objection to being clones of the networks—if they could clone some of the networks' profits while they were at it. The cable industry, which had got its start in the early sixties, was still controlled largely by its founders, about whom Amos B. Hostetter, Jr., the chairman and chief executive officer of Continental Cablevision (and a longtime C-SPAN board member), observes, "These people were not Time Warner or Cox Broadcasting. They were small-town appliance dealers who put an antenna up on a hill and brought a wire down from there to hook your television set up, so that they could sell you the television set." When they thought about the future of the indus-

PORTA SAN PANCRAZIO

The bees haven't buzzed away, nor has a horseman galloped off. In the bar Gianicolo, old-timers enjoy their salad days, and the ice cube melts cooling the ailing motor grateful for sipping twice the proverbial water.

Eight years have scurried by. Wars have flared up and smoldered, families crumbled, scum bared its teeth grown older; airplanes fell from the sky and the radio mumbled "Jesus." The linen can still be washed, but the dermal creases

won't yield to the gentlest palm. The sun high above a winter Rome is jostling the purple smoke with bare rays. The cinder reeks of burned leaves, and the fountain is glittering like a wobbly medal pinned to a cannon at noon for its aimless volley.

Stone is employed worldwide to keep memory captive. Yet cropping up is much harder than vanishing in a perspective running out of the city straight through the years and further in its pursuit of pure time, devoid of love and future.

Life without us is, darling, thinkable. It exists as honeybees, horsemen, bars, habitués, columns, vistas and clouds over this battlefield whose every standing statue triumphs, with its physique, over a chance to touch you.

—JOSEPH BRODSKY

(Translated, from the Russian, by the author.)

try, their thoughts focussed on cash flow, not on proving anything to the country. "There was a tremendous amount of rejection," Lamb recalls. "People would pat you on the head, and say, 'Nice little boy, keep it up, Brian.'"

What turned Lamb's preposterous idea into a plausible one was, strangely, Congress. For years, there had been talk of letting TV cameras into the House of Representatives, and the talk began to get serious after Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr., became the House Speaker, in 1977. O'Neill insisted, however, that the cameras had to be under the House's control, and neither the commercial networks nor PBS would go along with that arrangement. The standoff between the House and the networks gave Lamb his opening.

It had always been assumed that television coverage of the House, when it happened, would be in the form of newsworthy snatches as defined by the television industry. But one afternoon in October of 1977 Lamb took the occasion of a *Cablevision* interview with

Lionel Van Deerlin, the chairman of the House Communications Subcommittee, to mention that cable TV, with its expanded channel capacity, might be capable of carrying the sessions of the House in full. When the question of installing cameras came up for a vote, Van Deerlin made a speech embracing the concept of a cable linkup, and the House, ignoring the networks' objections, endorsed the O'Neill plan. By now, Lamb had made a handful of converts—cable executives who believed that in order to expand their subscriber base they had to appeal to a wider range of tastes than the networks. One of these mavericks was Bob Rosencrans, the head of what later became United Artists Cable, who had recently joined forces with Madison Square Garden to create the MSG sports network. After the House vote, Lamb went to Rosencrans with a proposal to establish a nonprofit corporation to carry the House gavel to gavel. Rosencrans's response, as Lamb recalls it, was "I'll give you twenty-five thousand dollars

and my name—see what you can do.” Lamb continues, “So I took his name and the twenty-five thousand dollars and the fact that the House had agreed to televise, and I went around to the industry saying, ‘Can I get twenty-five from you? And you?’” Rosencrans made another key contribution to the enterprise: he offered Lamb a shared-time arrangement on MSG Network’s satellite channel. The new network would be able to use it by day, at a cut-rate price, and MSG would use it at night.

No less important was a new argument that rang out between the lines of Lamb’s appeal: cable TV had no news programming to speak of (CNN would not go on the air until 1980), so it wasn’t in a position to offer a politician exposure, as the networks could. As Henry Goldberg recalls, “now we could go back and say, ‘Look, what better way to curry favor with Congress than to carry them?’”

Lamb pieced together the backing he needed—the projected budget was only four hundred thousand dollars a year—and went to see the Speaker. His proposal was, on one hand, not very impressive. Cable wasn’t “real television,” and Lamb himself was a nobody. On the other hand, Lamb was talking about gavel-to-gavel coverage—something O’Neill had never dared to imagine—and he was offering the House leaders a chance to spit in the eye of the network-news people.

Lamb left O’Neill’s office with a handshake deal, and in the ensuing months, aided by Rosencrans and others, he formed a corporation—C-SPAN. It had four employees and a five-hundred-square-foot office in a Rosslyn, Virginia, apartment building when it began transmitting, on March 19, 1979. For its first seven months, the network showed the House and nothing else, and when the business of the House reached into the evening C-SPAN got summarily bumped by MSG. For a studio, Lamb used a corner of the office, with a backdrop consisting of a blue curtain and a C-SPAN sign (the sign collapsed in the middle of one early interview). The entire budget for C-SPAN over its first five years was about what, by the more conservative reports, ABC has just agreed to pay Diane Sawyer annually. “You can’t imagine how insignificant

I was—how insignificant this place was,” Lamb says.

THE last twenty-five years have seen two great initiatives, public TV and cable TV, launched for the declared purpose of bringing change to the medium. Between them, they have answered the wish lists of a number of underserved constituencies. But they have also proved increasingly inclined to emulate the tone, the pace, and the commercial thrust of television as it existed before they came along. “To me, the story of C-SPAN is not how it got started but what happened after it was started,” says John P. Frazee, Jr., the former chairman and C.E.O. of the telecommunications company Centel, who was also the chairman of C-SPAN’s board in the mid-eighties. “It would have been easy for Brian to turn C-SPAN into a CNN, with expensive sets, high-priced on-air talent, maybe even commercial sponsorship. He hasn’t done any of those things.”

C-SPAN was widely praised for its coverage of the 1992 Democratic National Convention. Elizabeth Kolbert commented in the *Times* that C-SPAN actually let you see and hear what was happening on the podium, while ABC gave viewers “a lot of talk about what the Democrats would have told them, if only Mr. Jennings and Mr. Brinkley and Mr. Wooten and the rest of the ABC News team hadn’t been so busy talking themselves.” After the Convention, however, C-SPAN went into a small frenzy of self-flagellation over the way a speech about AIDS, by Elizabeth Glaser, had been shot. The camerawork had been handled by a network pool, and John Splaine, a professor of education at the University of Maryland who serves as C-SPAN’s unofficial ethical watchdog, complained both about what, by C-SPAN standards, was a distracting number of cutaways—eleven in the last two minutes—and about the fact that most of them showed weeping women, while the actual audience was half male and many of the people in the hall, women as well as men, had dry eyes.

Although nobody besides Splaine objected, the cutaway issue helped C-SPAN to decide that the network would do its own podium coverage of the Republican Convention. The Republicans, as it happened, also had an

AIDS speech, also given by a woman (Mary Fisher). This time, the cutaways emphasized non-weeping males, including one, Vice-President Dan Quayle, who was making his way across the Convention floor shaking hands and ignoring the speech altogether.

The rest of TV news looks very odd when you come back to it after watching C-SPAN. Rituals long practiced with a great air of authority—the sign-ons, standups, and sign-offs; the drumbeat that attends the announcement of the story of the day; the gotcha questions that hardly ever get anyone—suddenly look like nervous tics. The whole rhythm of TV news begins to seem jerky and unnatural, like those little intervals of what some busy parents call “quality time” with their children. What the newsmen and women are out to prove, however, is toughness rather than love: toughness in a format that makes the real thing—tough scrutiny of positions, records, and issues—impossible, because it would take too much time.

Time is something that C-SPAN has plenty of, and the longer you watch C-SPAN the more you see that time is the key to everything else. Time makes it possible to deal with issues that seem utterly beyond the grasp of traditional TV news (NAFTA, health care, the information superhighway), and with unreachable subjects in the emotional realm as well. When you watch, say, Paul Tsongas’s wife leaning over to give him a kiss in the middle of his speech of withdrawal from the 1992 Presidential race, and Tsongas, his voice parched and throbbing, continuing, unaware of the lipstick impression that has been planted on his cheek, you realize that such a thing could never be captured on another network. Time creates the potential for boredom, of course, but also for something that has been virtually banished from television: spontaneity.

“Everything was getting shorter and shorter,” Roger Ailes, the former political consultant, who is now the president of the cable network CNBC, commented recently. “All the research pointed that way—and suddenly Brian Lamb said, ‘Hey, let’s do news longer and longer.’” The difference, from an interviewee’s perspective, was summed up for me by Ralph Nader. “I get invited on the ‘Today’ show every once in a while,” he told me. “Once, they gave me

three minutes and ten seconds, and I said, 'You know, you're moving from sound bites to sound barks—soon you'll ask me a question, and I'll just bark!' On C-SPAN, 'you can talk in sentences and paragraphs, back and forth,' Nader said. 'You can actually speak the language.'

At C-SPAN, as in all organizations, considerations of time and money are closely linked. Although C-SPAN is no longer a threadbare operation, it remains astonishingly inexpensive by cable as well as by broadcast standards. The pay scale is more in tune with the nonprofit world than with the TV world. (Lamb's salary of a hundred and ninety-five thousand dollars a year is lavish by C-SPAN standards. 'The board had to force him to take a raise,' John Frazee told me. 'He went multi-years without one, and he would just never bring it up.') The staff is tiny—a hundred and eighty-eight employees, at last count. (National Public Radio, by contrast, has four hundred and thirty-three.) C-SPAN's entire 1993 budget was eighteen million dollars—less than a twentieth of CNN's. Lamb has taken American television through a kind of time-cost warp into a new zone of economics, where every minute is *not* precious.

In recent years, television has been the subject of a heated intellectual debate between those who say it is bad and those who say it is irredeemably bad. C-SPAN makes mainstream TV's problems look a little less like the result of some built-in technological malevolence and a little more like that of (as Brian Lamb concluded twenty-five years ago) an artificially restricted market, carved out by three big, for-profit bureaucracies chasing the same mass audience. If television has an inherent nature, C-SPAN reminds us that it includes the simple ability to transport us to places—for the purpose, that is, of showing us not just Dan Rather in a new costume but something akin to life itself. Other reminders are beginning to pop up elsewhere on the television dial. 'When you have hundreds of channels instead of a few networks, the audience gets so split up that nobody can afford to invest huge amounts of money in any one program, as such,' Lawrence K. Grossman, who has run PBS and also NBC News, pointed out to me recently. He was talking specifically about a venture in which he is involved—Horizons

Cable Network, 'a cultural and intellectual counterpart to C-SPAN,' which has backing from PBS and the public-television stations in New York and Boston. But he was also talking about a roster of other proposed talk and cultural networks. 'The idea is to just put cameras on existing events,' Grossman said, 'and not worry about television production as such.'

C-SPAN itself has expansion plans. As things stand, the unpredictable hours of the House and Senate (around which the rest of the schedule is constructed) sharply limit C-SPAN's ability to cover events live or to make programming decisions ahead of time, the way other networks do. If Lamb has his way, there will be a C-SPAN3, a C-SPAN4, and a C-SPAN5 in a few years—networks devoted, respectively, to domestic politics (political programming apart from the sessions of the Senate and the House), to business and economics, and to international affairs. Those ideas, however, are on hold for now, pending the resolution of the must-carry dispute and, more importantly, the advent of the 'five-hundred-channel universe.'

Meanwhile, C-SPAN has been branching out in smaller ways: a Sunday-morning retrospective of the week's issues and events; the C-SPAN Schoolbus, a traveling exhibit, for teachers and students, of the network's educational possibilities; and a plan (in connection with C-SPAN's fifteenth anniversary) to televise reenactments of the Lincoln-Douglas debates from the Illinois towns where they originally occurred. (Lamb is quick to point out that the towns, not C-SPAN, will be responsible for the staging, and that the venture is a onetime thing—not a first step down the road to docudrama.) C-SPAN has also been sowing offspring around the world. Ireland, Australia, Venezuela, Japan, France, Israel, Germany, Finland, Korea—about forty countries in all have sent delegations to Washington to consult Lamb, and quite a few have put their legislatures on TV or have taken steps in that direction. 'It's spreading,' Lamb says. 'Yes, sir.'

Over the last few years, Lamb has withdrawn from day-to-day management decisions, assuming what he calls an 'overseer's' role. He has done so, he explained to me, partly in order to have more time for such projects as the debates and the Schoolbus, and partly in

order to insure that 'if I walk out of here tomorrow this place will survive.'

C-SPAN is the promise that all those guys talked about when radio and television were first getting started,' Jeff Greenfield, of ABC News, says. 'They said, 'This will bring Americans closer to their government—isn't that great?' But it never worked out that way, because radio and television found other things to do—until Brian came along.'

The first people in Washington to wake up to C-SPAN were a group of conservative Republicans in the House, led by Newt Gingrich, of Georgia. Near the end of Ronald Reagan's first term, they began using a special time slot at the end of the legislative day to deliver blistering attacks on the Democrats and their policies—attacks intended not for the ears of their colleagues (who weren't present) but for those of the home audience. Through C-SPAN, Gingrich and a few colleagues achieved a degree of national celebrity unheard of among members of the House, and they got the attention of the House leadership. In May of 1984, Tip O'Neill, infuriated by their tactics, ordered the camera to pan the chamber, revealing for the first time that it was empty. (The Democrats have since concluded that neither party's dignity is enhanced by the spectacle of legislators orating in a void; beginning on May 23rd, the House will revert, at least temporarily, to the old practice of showing only the member who has the floor.) What Gingrich and the others had discovered was a way to get airtime that was not conditioned on their willingness to be, as Gingrich put it to me recently, 'in the place the news media are paying attention to.'

While Gingrich, the heir apparent to the post of House Minority Leader, serves to illustrate the career-boosting possibilities of the network, the example of Senator Joseph Biden, Jr., of Delaware, suggests the perils that now await a politician whose story does not play well on C-SPAN. Seven years ago, as a fledgling candidate for President, Biden welcomed the network's cameras into a kaffeeklatsch with a group of New Hampshire voters, and proceeded to give a considerably exaggerated account of his academic achievements and to tell the man who had innocently inquired about them, 'I think I have a much

higher I.Q. than you do." Eleanor Clift, a reporter for *Newsweek*, obtained a videotape of this bizarre performance, and was inspired to do the research that established Biden's falsehoods. Her story, coming on top of revelations of oratorical plagiarism (operatives in the rival campaign of Michael Dukakis had circulated an "attack video," also derived from C-SPAN, demonstrating that Biden had lifted not only phrases but autobiographical anecdotes from the British Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock), seemed to knock the stuffing out of his candidacy. Biden withdrew from the race before a single primary or caucus was held.

The subject of C-SPAN's effect on American politics is one that Lamb himself steadfastly avoids. Others, however, maintain that it has helped ease out of power a generation of American politicians whose gift for television was limited to the delivery of prepared speeches and sound bites, and has helped bring forward a generation who, like House Speaker Thomas Foley and Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, are articulate in a sustained, everyday way, and comfortable arguing the merits as well as the politics of an issue.

When Bill Clinton's campaign for President was still in the dreaming stage, his gubernatorial press secretary, Michael Gauldin, decided to "target" C-SPAN. "It was a good method of shooting over the wall" to reach a "political elite," Gauldin, who is now the chief public-relations officer at the Department of Energy, says. After an appearance before the Democratic Leadership Council in May of 1991, Clinton himself kept talking to friends and associates about how many people had seen his speech on C-SPAN. That summer, Gauldin made a conscious effort to have him appear at events that C-SPAN was likely to cover—and to alert the network to his presence. "It was as if he were on C-SPAN all the time," Gauldin says.

Clinton's great talent for simply talking to people, with TV cameras running, matched up well with what polls and focus groups suggested was mounting popular dissatisfaction with the way candidates had been pre-

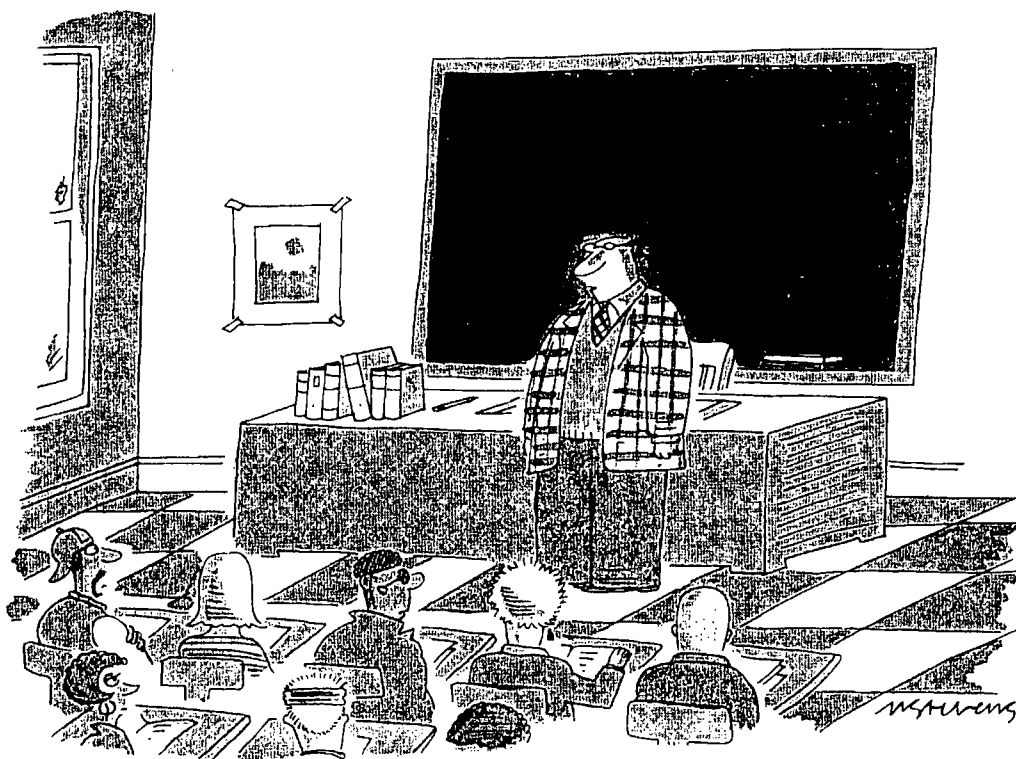
sented themselves (or had been presented) on TV: in sound bites, photo ops, and attacks on other candidates. People were ready, it seemed to Clinton's principal media adviser during the campaign, Frank Greer, for a candidate who was obsessively devoted to issues.

"When we hit the feeding frenzy in New Hampshire, what did we do?" Greer says. "We bought thirty minutes of time"—on commercial stations—"Thursday and Friday, and on Thursday we staged a town meeting with undecided voters and on Friday it was unscreened phone calls, just like C-SPAN. And, from that point on, what did you see happen? As the campaign progressed, you saw the networks—especially the morning shows—following the format of C-SPAN. I really look to Brian Lamb as a visionary in the world of media. He has given voters and citizens more of what they really want out of television, and he has forced the other media to start following his lead. I think he transformed the whole character of the campaign."

The Clinton Administration is no less dedicated to the use of long-form TV than the Clinton campaign was. The sales strategy for health-care reform involves sending the President—and the First Lady and other key figures—to a series of town-hall meetings around the

country. Before the advent of C-SPAN, no network would have deigned to show such gatherings in full, partly for economic reasons but partly because of another of those conventions that went unquestioned until Brian Lamb came along: a medium-wide aversion to "self-serving events." Such events are, of course, C-SPAN's bread and butter, and its readiness to cede hours of national TV time to partisan groups—not only Democrats and Republicans but Libertarians, Perotistas, and socialists—may be the most revolutionary thing about the network. As far as health care is concerned, the White House has had its say on C-SPAN, and so have the insurance companies, the pharmaceutical manufacturers, supporters of the single-payer plan, and virtually every other organized group with a point of view.

In the 1992 campaign, Ross Perot called for an "electronic town hall" in which the President would act as a sort of m.c., spelling out a problem and its possible solutions, and the people would then vote for the solution they favored. It is a vision that has struck some commentators as an invitation to high-tech demagoguery. Meanwhile, unnoticed by Perot or his critics, a prototype of the electronic town hall has already arrived, and it is not so scary. ♦



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C-SPAN School Buses Teach Students About Government

By Karen L. Abercrombie

Kennett Square, Pa.

"How many of you have ever heard of C-SPAN?"

A smattering of hands went up as Monique Llanos asked middle school students here earlier this month about the Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network, which is best known for bringing coverage of the U.S. House and Senate to television sets across the country.

While several of the students from Charles F. Patton Middle School said they had heard of the cable television service, most did not watch it or know what it had to offer.

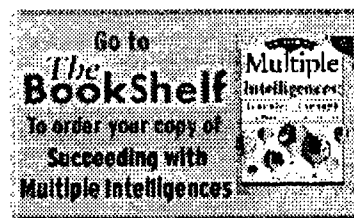
That is the main reason why the Washington-based nonprofit channel conducts nationwide tours using the *c-SPAN* School Bus: to get the word out about how *C-SPAN* can be used to teach students about the federal government, according to Ms. Llanos, the organization's guide on the bus visiting the 900-student school southwest of Philadelphia.

One 8th grader was quite impressed with the tour. "I think it's neat seeing how *C-SPAN* goes to different schools teaching kids about all of this," said 14-year-old Lindsey Thacher. "And it's fun to learn."

There are actually two canary-yellow, customized motor coaches that travel the country during the school year to introduce students and educators to using *C-SPAN*'s public-affairs programming in the curriculum.

Each bus cost about \$800,000 and serves as a television production facility as well as an educational-demonstration center. *C-SPAN*'s first bus started traveling in November 1993 and the second took to the road in January 1996.

Among other activities, teachers are encouraged to register on *c-SPAN*'s World Wide Web site at www.cspan.org for "*C-SPAN* in the Classroom," a program that makes available each month free lesson plans and teaching materials on such topics as how Congress works and how to get in touch with local representatives. Teachers can also obtain free *C-SPAN* videotaped archives for use in their classrooms.



Read our story, "[Cable Channel To Broadcast Only Children's Educational Programs](#)," May 6, 1998.

Aiding First-Timers

The cable service's name is primarily associated with its coverage of congressional floor action and hearings, so it makes sense that the buses also spend time educating people at schools, museums, and libraries about political races and government proceedings.

The 22-ton buses have already been used to help inform students about many of the congressional and state campaigns this year.

During the 1996 presidential season, the buses were used to get high school seniors involved in voting.

The cable service held a contest called "First Vote," in which students were asked to explain how *C-span*'s programming affected first-time voters.

Students could answer the question through writing an essay or a poem, or by creating a Web site, a video, or some other form of artwork. Scholarship money and other prizes were awarded to the students with the best entries.

The aim of the contest, Ms. Llanos explained, was to encourage students to become informed voters.

Special Lessons

C-SPAN was created in 1979 and is privately funded by the cable television industry.

Six cents from each local subscriber's bill goes toward paying for the service, according to Ms. Llanos.

With this funding, *C-SPAN*, which covers House proceedings, has been able to add two other channels.

In 1986, *C-SPAN 2* was added to cover the Senate, and *C-SPAN Extra* got its start in September 1997 for live coverage of other public-affairs events.

In addition, both *C-SPAN* and *C-SPAN 2* provide live or taped coverage of hearings, conferences, and other events of public interest when Congress is not in session.

Local cable companies are actively involved in promoting the *C-span* school buses' visits.

In Pennsylvania, for instance, the state's Cable and Telecommunications Association sponsored a student technology showcase last April involving about 50 schools from across the state.

As a part of the event, the group also raffled various prizes for schools, such as software and hardware computer products or a visit from one of the *C-span* buses.

Robin Martin, the computer and technology coordinator at Charles F. Patton Middle School, won the raffle that brought the bus to her school.

"Some of our 6th grade social studies and government studies teachers use *C-span* when there are special events," Ms. Martin said.

"So for these students to see how the magic goes from the bus to the TV is really special," she added.

On the Web

Here are some facts about the *C-SPAN* school bus.

C-SPAN offers several lesson plans, teaching ideas and classroom resources for educators.

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Vol. 18, number 4, page 18

Hill and in the White House, Lamb grew more and more outraged that a handful of big-three TV executives had near-total control over what most Americans learned about their government. With the exception of Presidential debates every four years, very little was presented in full. Someone in New York or Washington always served as editor, interpreter—or censor.

Lamb dreamed of broadcasting the proceedings of the House of Representatives and Senate live and unedited—not just a few selected sound bites served up on the nightly news. And he imagined a form of television that would permit the public to question members of Congress, the executive branch and the media.

When the House opened its doors to TV cameras in 1979, he got his chance. Many subscribers may have seen cable as a way to improve TV reception; Lamb saw it as a way to improve American democracy. Over the course of four years, he had approached the operators of cable stations and explained his idea for an independent, nongovernment-funded public-affairs channel. Two owners in particular—one conservative, the other liberal—disagreed with each other on virtually every issue. But they and other industry leaders put up the \$425,000 to seed C-SPAN, the Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network.

When C-SPAN went on the air in 1979, it consisted of four employees and a kid on a bicycle carrying

videotape from the Capitol to the studio. Today it employs 185 people, and its yearly budget is \$18 million. Relative to the other networks, this is tiny. But C-SPAN reaches more than half the homes in America. It has turned homemakers, teachers and engineers into public-affairs addicts.

C-SPAN sends cameras where TV has never gone before. It has brought viewers into the impeachment hearings of two federal judges. It takes Americans into the Canadian Parliament and the often tumultuous British House of Commons. While the major networks featured their own correspondents in Moscow during last year's coup, C-SPAN broadcast the Soviet evening news translated into English.

Congressional Soapbox. When C-SPAN began gavel-to-gavel coverage of the House, the first Congressman it telecast was a little-known Democrat from Tennessee. Today Al Gore is a prominent Senator. In the early days another obscure Congressman, Newt Gingrich (R., Ga.), began to make long speeches during "special orders," when any member can take the floor and speak on any subject for a full hour after adjournment. The chamber was empty, but Gingrich knew that with C-SPAN he could reach a nationwide audience.

Gingrich was later joined by other Republican "backbenchers," including Robert Walker (Pa.), Connie Mack (Fla.) and Vin Weber (Minn.). Until then, lacking committee chairmanships or se-

niority, younger members of Congress were rarely seen and seldom heard. Now they had a soapbox and megaphone.

In the mid-1980s Gingrich relentlessly pursued ethics charges against then-Speaker of the House Jim Wright (D., Texas). During the controversy that led to Wright's resignation, Gingrich, who had become a household name through C-SPAN, was elected House Republican Whip, the party's second-highest leadership position.

Every morning House members are offered one minute to make short speeches on any topic. House Democrats usually capitalize on C-SPAN to send forward a stream of members striking different chords of the same theme. One day it might be unemployment, the next health care. Rep. James Traficant (D., Ohio) has turned the one-minute speech into an art form, and several of his tempestuous outbursts have made the evening news.

In July 1986, C-SPAN II was launched to provide live coverage of the Senate. During a trip to Egypt, Sen. John McCain (R., Ariz.) was astonished when President Hosni Mubarak told him that "sometimes you and the Senate get very aggravated." Mubarak explained that he watched C-SPAN through a U.S. Information Agency satellite link. "He acted as if he knew me," McCain says.

Unique Mission. Every weekday at 8 a.m. Eastern time and again at 6:30 p.m., C-SPAN telecasts 90-

minute call-in programs with journalists, members of Congress and other newsmakers. Lamb and other low-key hosts such as Susan Swain and Bruce Collins ask questions and take calls but keep their own opinions strictly to themselves. The focus is always on the guests—and the audience, toward which the network is unswervingly respectful.

Viewer devotion to the call-in programs is intense. Californians rise at 5 a.m. to participate in this nationwide discussion about current events, and it is not uncommon for folks in Hawaii, where the program airs at 3 a.m., to call as well.

The atmosphere is like a town meeting. Observes viewer James Crosswhite of San Diego: "A voice from Florida responds to a voice from Iowa; a voice from Oregon comments on the exchange. I hear the voices raw, in regional accent."

Its mission of regularly presenting members of Congress to the people for give-and-take is unique. C-SPAN also presents journalists live and unscripted, during the call-in shows, which gives the public an opportunity to talk back to the media. Journalists are often forcefully reminded that large sections of the public regard the press as biased.

Early in the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings, Washington reporters Mara Liasson, Michael Kranish and David Savage were being interviewed. All three

expressed skepticism about Thomas's professed impartiality. Later, a caller observed that while viewers see C-SPAN as impartial, the public placed the establishment media on the same level as "dishonest used-car dealers and shyster lawyers." The journalists assured him that they go out of their way to be unbiased presenting the news. Another viewer soon called, saying the panelists claimed they couldn't imagine Thomas would not have any preconceived ideas, yet they just said that they try to be very unbiased. "There seems to be a contradiction here," the caller said.

Power of the People. By making the workings of government more accessible to the average American, C-SPAN has had a significant impact on the lives of some of its viewers.

Growing up in rural Cando, N.D., Richard Armey always loved politics. But he never regarded becoming a member of Congress as a realistic goal. Washington, he said, seemed "a far-off, distant place," so special "that it would be pretentious for me to aspire to go there."

Then, while teaching economics in Texas in 1980, Armey had his first glimpse of C-SPAN. His reaction? "Those are a bunch of fools up there." Watching Congress at work demystified government for him, and Armey announced for Congress. In 1984 he was elected and has served ever since.

Kay Cutcher is a Sioux City, Iowa, homemaker who formed the

"Sioux City Watchdogs," a network of 150 viewers who regularly monitor C-SPAN. When legislation of particular interest is being debated, the watchdogs phone Congress. "I never realized how often I was phoning my Congressman until I saw my phone bill," Cutcher says.

C-SPAN is not just for Congress-watchers. Every four years, the network tracks the Presidential race with its "Road to the White House" series. During the 1988 primaries, a C-SPAN camera captured Sen. Joe Biden (D., Del.) snappishly telling off a Claremont, N.H., voter, "I think I have a much higher I.Q. than you." Biden went on to claim that he had gone to law school on a full scholarship, graduated in the top half of his class and been showered with awards. That scene became a defining moment in the campaign when it was learned that Biden, who graduated 76th in a class of 85, had vastly overstated his accomplishments.

C-SPAN has taken viewers almost everywhere during the 1992 Presidential campaign, following candidates into diners in New Hampshire, to debates in South Dakota, to party conferences in Georgia. In one 30-hour period last March, C-SPAN televised live three separate debates of Democratic Presidential candidates. Viewers throughout the country saw Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton stumble into what the New York Times described as "an infelicitous

double-entendre." Asked if half his Cabinet appointments would be women, Clinton, who had been plagued by accusations of extramarital affairs, replied, "I wouldn't restrict myself to having just half the Cabinet be women. I might want more."

C-SPAN is seen all over the world via satellite, and its call-in shows frequently feature calls from Europe and the Middle East, where people are watching live. One particularly moving tribute to the impact of C-SPAN came in the form of a letter from a young engineer who was living in Hangzhou, China.

The engineer discovered C-SPAN by fiddling with the satellite dish on the roof of the institute where he was working. "Through C-SPAN," he wrote, "I have learned the devoted challenging of your people, the free debate and vote in your president selection, your education system and the power of your people."

The big-three networks still se-

lect the most sensational footage for their news reports. But they no longer dominate television. Before cable, 95 percent of the prime-time audience was watching one of the three networks. Today the networks account for only 55 percent of the viewing audience. In the age of the sound bite, C-SPAN has reintroduced the in-depth discussion.

In 13 short years, C-SPAN has become an indispensable part of our national life. During the weeks leading to the Gulf War, C-SPAN's beginning-to-end coverage of the Congressional debate and its call-in programs gave every American an opportunity to participate directly in the decision to go to war.

Says the Washington Post's Pulitzer Prize-winning TV critic Tom Shales: "Laws that open previously closed doors to public scrutiny are called sunshine laws; in bringing Americans and their government closer together—literally within reach—C-SPAN is ultimate sunshine."

Police Blotter

From the Hudson, N.Y., *Register-Star*: "A woman reported to police that an unidentified man had taken a picture of her through the window of her residence. Police said they searched the area with negative results."

From the Stratford, Conn., *Star*: "At 8:20 p.m., officers received a missing-persons report. Investigation revealed that the man had forgotten his wife was admitted to the hospital the previous evening."

From the Monterey, Calif., *Bay Tribune*: "Resident reported she has been receiving phone calls from a male named Lee for 25 years. She is tired of the calls and will change her phone number."

look on, amazed. A teen-ager shoveling snow may be hit by the impulse and shovel his neighbor's driveway too.

Senseless acts of beauty spread. A man plants daffodils along a roadway. A concerned citizen roams the streets collecting litter in a supermarket cart. A student scrubs graffiti from a park bench. It's a positive anarchy, a gentle disorder, a sweet disturbance.

They say you can't smile without cheering yourself up. Likewise, you

can't commit a random act of kindness or beauty without feeling as if your own troubles have been lightened—because the world *has* become a slightly better place.

And you can't be a recipient without feeling a pleasant jolt. If you were one of those commuters whose bridge fare was paid, who knows what you might have been inspired to do for someone else?

Like all revolutions, guerrilla goodness begins slowly, with a single act. Let it be yours.

Call Waiting

IN RALPH EMERY'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY, *Memories*, the country-music D. J. and host of TV's "Nashville Now" relates one of his early experiences in radio:

Telephone calls were an extremely popular part of the program. The long-distance calls didn't ring, but were signaled by flashing red lights inside the control room. When the show wasn't on the air, the phones weren't answered, although they rang almost incessantly.

A new engineer one day picked up one of the flashing telephones.

"Hello," said the caller, "I'm calling from West Virginia. May I speak to Ralph Emery?"

"I'm sorry," he replied, "but the show won't be on for three and a half more hours."

"Okay," she said, "may I hold?"

—With Tom Carter, *Memories* (Macmillan)

AS A LONG-DISTANCE OPERATOR, I often deal with collect calls from prison inmates. One morning as I was placing a call from a prisoner, I asked the man to hold "one moment" while I connected his call. He laughed and said, "One moment? Take your time, lady—I've got 19 years."

—Contributed by Deborah A. Bryant

THE YOUNG DAUGHTER of a friend of mine was calling her mother collect. The operator came on the line and said, "Will this be a person-to-person call?"

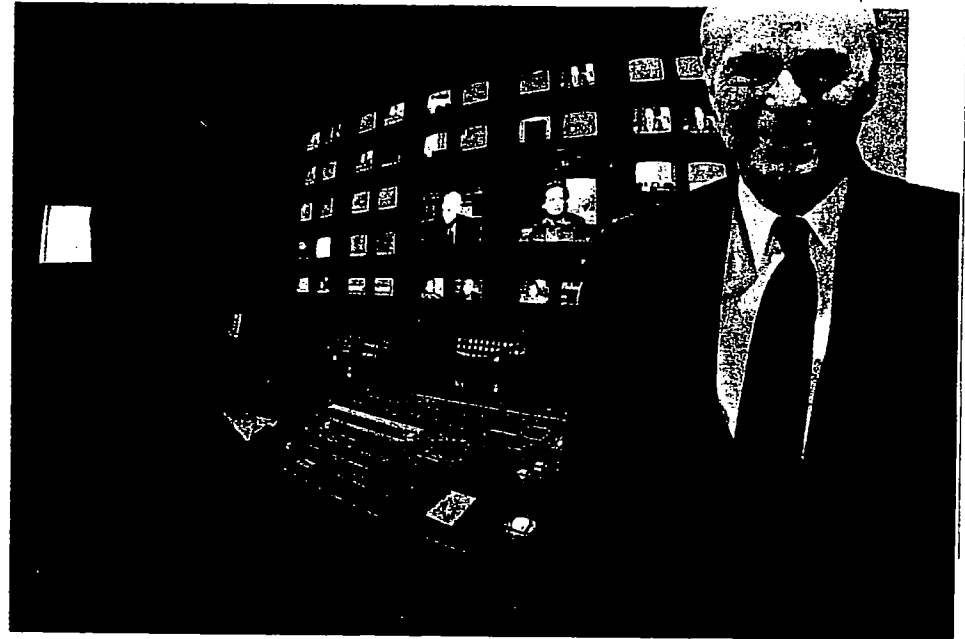
"Well, I'd like to speak to my mother," said the youngster.

"Do you know that it will be more expensive?" replied the operator.

"Okay," answered the girl. "Then let me speak to my sister."

—Contributed by Jessica E. Thompson

C-SPAN: Where TV Has Never Gone Before



Brian Lamb and the C-SPAN control room

Stay tuned—and you may be hooked on democracy at work

By MONA CHAREN

WHEN 24-YEAR-OLD Navy Lt. Brian Lamb was assigned to the Pentagon in 1966, the Lafayette, Ind., native was brimming with idealism.

But the image of Mr. Smith Goes

to Washington, he soon discovered, did not match reality. From a window in the Pentagon, Lamb watched anti-Vietnam War demonstrators rev up their fury on cue for ABC, NBC and CBS cameras. Then he'd note that the lead story on the network evening news was often dictated not by its importance but by whether dramatic footage was available.

In subsequent jobs on Capitol

PHOTOS: © KEN HEINEN

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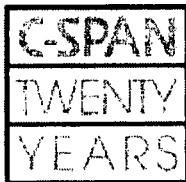
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CABLE'S GIFT TO AMERICA



Created by Cable.
Offered as a Public Service.

Twenty years ago America's cable companies decided to provide gavel-to-gavel coverage of Congress as a public service, at no cost to the taxpayer. Since then C-SPAN has been bringing the House and the Senate -- democracy as it happens -- into our homes and schools.

In 1999 C-SPAN is celebrating **Cable's Gift to America** with a nationwide media campaign.

Watch the advertisement: [Video](#)

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rebroadcasts of the commercial network's Sunday public affairs programs each Sunday afternoon, beginning at noon ET.

Throughout C-SPAN's development, it has never veered from its original mission: to air unedited, balanced views of government and public policy forums, and to provide viewers with direct access to elected officials, decision-makers and journalists

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BEHIND THE SCENES



Event Coverage

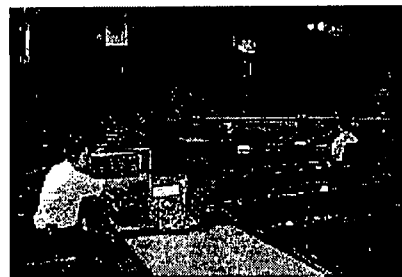
Crews and Coverage

For large events such as this Senate Banking Committee hearing, C-SPAN camera crews typically arrive on the scene three hours before the event actually begins. On this particular day, a committee room in the Dirksen Senate Office Building will be transformed into a temporary studio, complete with cameras, microphones, cables and control equipment. For this event, a crew of six is required to operate all the equipment. However, not all events receive such elaborate coverage. Many events aired on C-SPAN, like outdoor campaign stops or interviews in the halls of the Capitol, are often covered using only a two-person crew consisting of a camera operator and sound technician. With less equipment being used, the setup times are much shorter than the three hours mentioned above.

The Equipment

Capturing sound for an event like this hearing requires over a dozen microphones. Fixed microphones are set up in front of each speaker, and additional boom-mounted "shotgun" microphones can also be used to cover participants. The overall sound is

controlled by an audio technician using a mixing console. By adjusting the volume and other characteristics of each microphone, the audio technician ensures the clarity of the sound recorded at the event. Having such thorough audio resources, C-SPAN often provides sound for other media organizations that send cameras to the event.



To provide camera coverage of this event, two different types of cameras are used. Primary coverage is furnished by mounted cameras, like the one pictured at the top of this page, set up on tripods and manned by operators. In addition, a remotely-operated camera, or robo-cam (pictured left), is

used in situations where it would be impractical to place a manned

camera. Outside the hearing room, an operator controls the motion and focus of the robo-cam using a small remote control device.

Just outside the committee room, the crew chief coordinates event coverage from a mobile control unit. As its name implies, the mobile control unit has many of the features found in studio control rooms. The mobile control unit allows the crew chief to simultaneously monitor the shots from each camera and choose which ones will actually be aired or recorded (for a closer view of the the mobile control unit, [click here](#)). When an event is carried live on C-SPAN, the crew chief will also be in contact with the control studio at C-SPAN to ensure the transmission is being sent properly.



In addition to their technical duties, shoot crews also maintain a detailed shoot sheet for each event they cover. Shoot sheets contain such information as the name of the event and its sponsor, the names and titles of all participants and the location and length of the event. Although they may not seem important, shoot sheets are a vital element of event coverage. Not only are on-air captions created from information on the shoot sheets, but the event length recorded on the sheets will be used later for scheduling purposes.

Following the completion of the event, the collection of cameras, microphones, cables and control equipment is disassembled and packed for the next day's assignment. Since the equipment is designed for portability, disassembling and packing is usually completed within 30 minutes. The final step for the camera crew is to bring the completed videotape of the event to C-SPAN's programming operations center, where it will be prepared for airing.

Next: Airing the Event

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BEHIND THE SCENES



Selecting Events

The Assignment Desk

Public affairs events come in a wide range of formats.

Speeches, news conferences, forums and hearings are just some of the types of events that take place every day in Washington and beyond.

Providing the public with the best variety of public affairs programming requires staying abreast of events

taking place and understanding their relevance. This responsibility falls to C-SPAN's Assignment Desk. The Assignment Desk consists of several editors, each of whom is responsible for keeping track of events going on in a particular geographic location. One editor, for example, follows events on Capitol Hill, while another editor monitors events happening elsewhere in Washington, D.C.



Editors find out about events through a variety of means. In addition to receiving a deluge of faxes each day, editors also learn about events through mailed notices, emails and telephone invitations. Assignment Desk editors also spend several hours each day on the phone, actively seeking out other events for possible coverage and monitoring any changes in event scheduling. By mid-afternoon, each editor has developed a comprehensive list of events taking place in his or her area the next day.

The Daily Shoot Meeting



At 3 p.m. each day, members of the Assignment Desk sit down with representatives of C-SPAN's editorial departments for the daily shoot meeting. The purpose of the shoot meeting is to determine which events C-SPAN will cover the next day. Having only a fixed number of camera crews, C-SPAN cannot cover every

event the Assignment Desk learns about. Each meeting begins with a review of the compiled list of events taking place the next day. Certain events, like speeches at the National Press Club and news conferences by congressional leaders, automatically receive coverage. In addition, special requests for camera coverage are

occasionally made from other departments within C-SPAN.

After the list is reviewed, each event is polled for interest. Participants in the shoot meeting look for events that meet four basic conditions:

- the events should be of a public affairs nature;
- the subject of the events should be an issue of national importance;
- events should be selected so as to show balance between different sides of a particular issue; and
- the speakers participating in the events should be closely related to the topic under discussion.

After further discussion, the original list of events is whittled down to a smaller number of final candidates. At this point, logistical considerations like event location and time play a prominent role in event selection. An additional event can often be included if it takes place near an event already scheduled for coverage at a different time. Awareness of such logistical details allows C-SPAN to maximize the number of events its camera crews can cover, resulting in a greater variety of on-air programming.

By the end of the shoot meeting, a tentative coverage schedule for the next day is agreed upon. At this point, event sponsors are contacted to make any necessary arrangements. The scheduling of individual camera crews also takes place. Since camera crew members spend so much time away from the office covering events, they receive their next day assignments nightly from a telephone recording.

Next: Event Coverage

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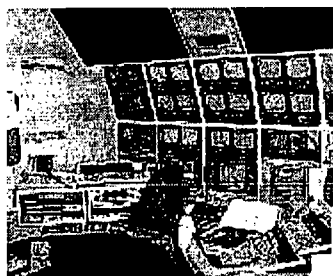
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BEHIND THE SCENES



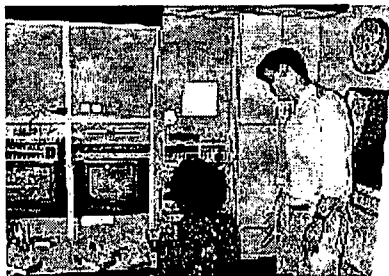
Airing the Event

Processing Tapes

Activities associated with airing an event are handled by C-SPAN's programming operations division. Programming operations is responsible for editing, scheduling and airing all events that appear on C-SPAN. Once the camera crew returns from covering an event, the tapes and shoot sheets are turned over to a shift producer in programming operations. A production assistant then enters information about the tape into a computerized library system. This system is used to track the physical location of each tape, as well as store pieces of information such as event name, date, participants and length. After each tape is entered into the system, it is placed on a shelf with other tapes to await editing.

At this point, a staff member takes the shoot sheet to a device called a Chyron station to create the captions that will be shown when the event airs. Captions are created for pieces of information such as the name of the event, the event sponsor and participants.

These captions are not directly superimposed onto the video tape, but are stored in the Chyron system under a unique reference number. Before air time, the list of captions and reference numbers will be given to the master control operator in the control room. When the event airs, the operator can bring any caption on-screen simply by entering its reference number.



Because C-SPAN strives to air events in their entirety, editing is kept to a minimum. However, occasional glitches do sometimes occur during taping. These might include audio difficulties or a camera focusing on the wrong person. These minor glitches are edited out as subtly as possible to minimize disrupting the continuity of

the event. After the tapes are edited, they are shelved with other edited tapes in the tape library and their status is updated on the computerized library system. With editing completed and all

necessary captions prepared, the event is now ready to be aired.

Putting A Schedule Together

Due to the amount of live programming aired on C-SPAN, creating a daily program schedule can be a complicated process. Since the primary mission of C-SPAN is to provide live, gavel-to-gavel coverage of the House of Representatives (or, in the case of C-SPAN2, the Senate), no other programming can be aired until recess is declared in the House or Senate. Unfortunately for the programming schedulers, neither the House nor the Senate operates with a pre-determined recess time, making it nearly impossible to know in advance when other programming can be aired. A similar problem can also arise while providing live coverage of events that continue past their scheduled conclusion time. As a result, it isn't unusual for a programming lineup to be revised several times throughout the course of a day.

Each afternoon, the programming operations staff meets to schedule the evening's program lineup. The goal of this meeting is to create an evening schedule starting at 8 p.m. (or whenever the day's session in Congress ends) and continuing until the start of the Washington Journal at 7 a.m. the next morning. In determining an evening's lineup, a variety of issues have to be addressed. If the House or Senate is in session that day, how late is that session expected to last? How long are the events that were covered that day? In addition to such logistical questions, several editorial issues involving program selection must be addressed. For example, when several events are scheduled to be aired at night, one must be chosen as the "headline" event to begin the lineup. And, as always, events must also be selected to reflect a balance between opposing sides of an issue.

By late afternoon, a tentative program schedule for the evening is determined. Whenever possible, this schedule includes a three-hour block of events that begins at 8 p.m. and re-airs at 11 p.m. (8 p.m. on the west coast). This schedule is then entered into a computerized schedule log. As previously



mentioned, scheduling is frequently complicated by live coverage of Congress or other events. In such cases, the initial schedule is based on an estimate of when the live event will conclude. For instance, when a House session lasts into the evening, the initial nightly schedule may be based on an estimated House adjournment time of 8 p.m. If the House is still in session past 8 p.m., the schedule may then be revised to reflect an adjournment time of 9:30 p.m. When the House finally does adjourn, the schedule is then updated "on the fly" to reflect the actual time of adjournment. Since each revised schedule must conclude at 7 a.m. the next day and no event can air simultaneously on both C-SPAN and C-SPAN2, some programs must be added or removed from the lineup to fit the available time. Balancing the desired program lineup with time constraints is one of the major challenges faced daily in programming operations. Not surprisingly, this challenge also makes it difficult to provide the public with precise schedule information ahead of time.

The Final Result



Shortly before a taped event is aired, a master control operator in the rack room (pictured at left) places the tape into one of the tape drives. Once the tape is ready to play, the operator conveys the tape deck number to the master control operator in the control room. From the control room, the operator controls the actual

airing of an event. He or she can start and stop a tape in a tape drive, bring up captions and fade in and out of programs. Inside the master control room are several video monitors, allowing the operator to keep track of each element of the broadcast. One monitor displays only the captions currently on display, while another displays only the "raw" video being aired. The actual broadcast, combining both video and captions, appears on a separate screen.



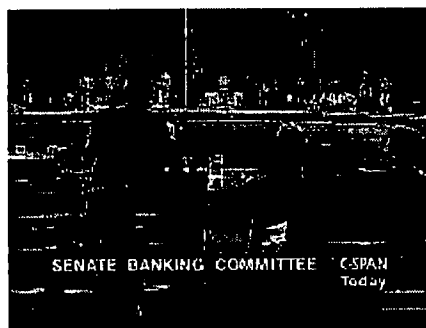
All of the effort put into covering an event now comes together. At the scheduled time, the master control operator starts the tape drive and adds any needed captions. From the control room, the broadcast is relayed by satellite to cable companies throughout the United States and abroad, and from there into the homes of C-SPAN viewers.

When all airings of the event are completed for the evening, the rackroom operator removes the tape from the tape drive and places it back in the tape library, where it can be accessed for future airings. With only a limited

amount of physical storage space in the library, tapes are usually kept for only a few weeks before they are discarded. However, no event aired on C-SPAN is permanently destroyed. Each event that airs on C-SPAN and C-SPAN2 is recorded and stored at the Public Affairs Video Archives (PAVA) at Purdue University. With its comprehensive archiving resources, PAVA also handles C-SPAN videotape sales.

Conclusion

We hope this virtual tour has given you a greater insight into the daily process of covering public affairs events on C-SPAN. Although certain events may receive slightly different coverage than the manner just described, the fundamental process remains the same. The next time you watch a speech or forum on C-SPAN, you should now have a greater understanding of all the hard work that goes into bringing that event into your home.



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ROUTING SLIP

DATE: 2/25/99

FROM: Stephanie Streett
Assistant to the President and Director of Presidential Scheduling

SUBJECT: President tape a video for C-SPAN's 20th Anniversary
of public affairs programming.

Virginia Apuzzo	___	Capricia Marshall	___
Paul Begala	___	Thurgood Marshall Jr.	___
Lisa Berg	___	Minyon Moore	___
Samuel Berger	___	Bob Nash	___
Sidney Blumenthal	___	Jennifer Palmieri	___
Phil Caplan	___	John Podesta	___
Davis/Redington	✓	Clark Ray	___
Maria Echaveste	___	Steve Ricchetti	___
Tim Emrich	✓	Bruce Reed	___
Jeff Forbes	___	Dan Rosenthal	___
George Frampton	___	Charles Ruff	___
Nancy Hernreich	___	Patti Solis-Doyle	___
Mickey Ibarra	___	Craig Smith	___
Ron Klain	___	Doug Sosnik	___
Neal Lane	___	Gene Sperling	___
Lisa Levin	___	Larry Stein	___
Ann Lewis	✓	Todd Stern	___
Bruce Lindsey	___	Melanne Verveer	___
Joe Lockhart	✓	Michael Waldman	✓
		Brenda Anders	✓

FILE: Accept

COMMENTS: 3/3

VIDEO SCHEDULING PROPOSAL

2/23/99

☐ ACCEPT

☐ REGRET

☐ PENDING

TO: Stephanie Street
Director of Scheduling

FROM: Joe Lockhart
Press Secretary

REQUEST: That the President tape a video for C-SPAN's 20th anniversary of public affairs programming.

BACKGROUND: The President would make remarks to the C-SPAN board of directors (comprised of the CEO's of the top 40 cable companies in the U.S.) and C-SPAN staff.

PAYMENT: ~~Video~~ CSPAN

EVENT DATE: Video will be ^{shown} ~~aired~~: March 25, 1999, 7:00 pm

RECOMMENDED BY: Joe Lockhart

CONTACT: Brenda Anders 6-5654, Jennifer Palmieri 6-2987

Josh - no POTUS remarks on

C-SPAN

Steve Scully

626- =>
7956

- he's very helpful; wants you to call
once you write them.

ELECTRONIC CONGRESS

C-SPAN: From Novelty To Institution

When Brian Lamb launched his plan in 1979 to provide unbiased, unedited coverage of Congress, some critics questioned whether there would ever be much of an audience. Who would watch politicians debate such mundane matters as military construction projects when they could tune in to watch who shot J.R. Ewing on the television series "Dallas"?

But after nearly 20 years, C-SPAN (the Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network) has become a fixture of congressional culture and a remarkably successful endeavor that continues to attract new viewers. An estimated 22 million people watch C-SPAN each week, and it can be seen by as many as 71 million cable subscribers.

For C-SPAN junkies such as Regina LaBelle, Lamb's cable project is a "vital information source," so vital the Seattle lawyer started an organization to battle cable systems that cancel or scale back the network.

C-SPAN has grown well beyond its gavel-to-gavel coverage of the House and Senate and some committee hearings. The network now includes news conferences, political conventions, national campaigns and a popular weekly book review show. In May, C-SPAN began a nine-month series retracing the French author Alexis de Tocqueville's trip through America in 1831.

Even while it broadens its scope, C-SPAN leaves its mark on Congress. "I don't think there's any doubt that it's made a difference," said Democratic Rep. Sidney R. Yates of Illinois, who was first elected to the House in 1948. It not only has altered the way Congress operates but also has bolstered the careers of many members, including House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Ga.

In July 1986, when the Senate first voted to allow permanent live coverage of its proceedings, Sen. Russell B. Long, D-La. (1948-87), one of the chief opponents of opening the Senate floor to television, predicted that it would result in "an increase in political expediency at the expense of statesmanship." Although Lamb, C-SPAN's founder and current chief executive officer, denies that Long's predictions have come true, there is little doubt that televising Congress has created more of an incentive for lawmakers to use the floor to appeal to voters or to generate support for a cause.

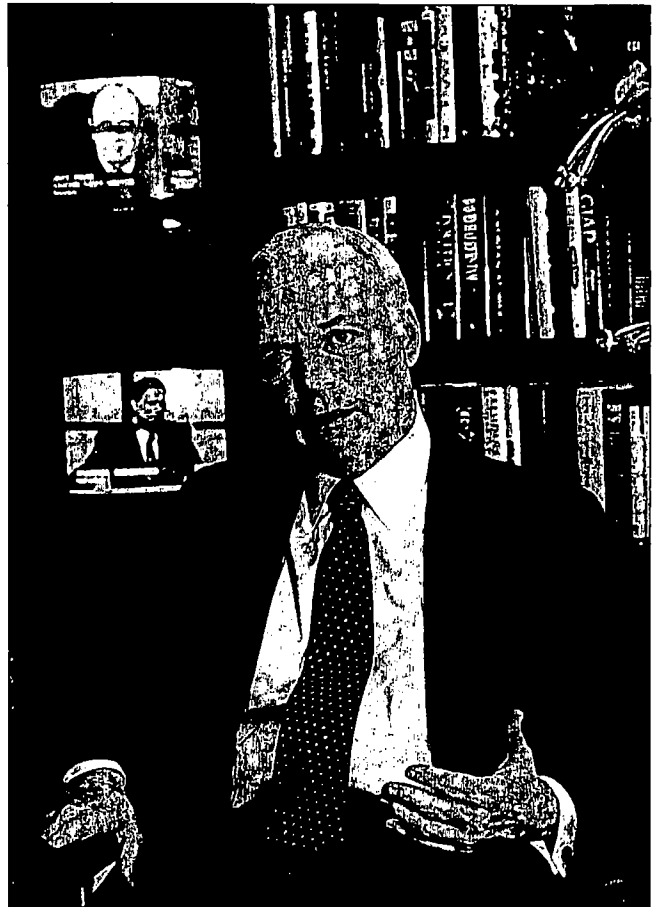
Andrew Jay Schwartzman, president of the Media Access Project, a public interest law firm that promotes the public's First Amendment rights, said C-SPAN has created "a tremendous opportunity for some of the more articulate, telegenic, earnest or crazed members, including a number without a whole lot of general influence or seniority, to be able to frame the debate or generate grass-roots interest in an issue."

Grandstanding or Grand Illumination?

There has been some debate over whether televised coverage of the often messy process of creating laws has only spurred more public contempt for Congress.

"Congress started [televising its proceedings] under the premise that to know us is to love us," said Stephen Frantzich, co-author of the book "The C-SPAN Revolution."

By Juliana Gruenwald



DOUGLAS GRAHAM

Founder Brian Lamb overcame critics' skepticism and built C-SPAN's viewership to an estimated 22 million people a week.

However, "The data shows that familiarity breeds contempt."

While viewers have certainly become more informed about the lawmaking process, Frantzich said his research has found that regular viewers tend to be more critical of Congress, though they have not become cynical enough to stop participating in the process.

Many observers say members of Congress now tend to use more props than ever before when making speeches and are better prepared when making floor remarks than in the past. Yates finds one of the biggest changes has been a quieter, more decorous House floor — not as much "hurly-burly" activity as in the past.

Members of Congress are "more inclined to do things for the cameras," said Richard Noyes, political studies director for the Center for Media and Public Affairs, which studies media coverage of social and political issues.

Sen. John Glenn, D-Ohio, who in 1986 voted in favor of allowing televised coverage of the Senate, said he believes that the internal workings of the Senate also have changed because of television. "You just happen to notice people up for re-election just happen to be giving more floor speeches than they do in off years," Glenn said. It is "used by people for their own personal reasons. . . . It's not the normal business of the Senate."

In an interview, Lamb said C-SPAN has provided members with a way to "individually talk back to their constituents," which he believes serves a useful function. But he said, "There has been some abuse of that, especially when it comes to special orders," the time set aside at the end of the day for

ELECTRONIC CONGRESS

House members to speak on any topic. Some members "take advantage of the fact that we're there, and they begin to use it for a political tool to curry favor with a constituency."

In his book, Frantzich, who is chairman of the political science department at the U.S. Naval Academy, points to a Congressional Research Service study that found a big increase in the number of special-orders speeches lawmakers made after cameras were introduced in each chamber.

Rep. James A. Traficant Jr., D-Ohio, said he never made any one-minute speeches until he was denied an opportunity to speak about an important bill. "You can get your message out and get popular support for your message," said Traficant, who gave more than 600 separate floor speeches during the 103rd Congress, many of which blasted corporate "fat cats" or U.S. trade policies. In the debate over GATT in 1994, Traficant said "it should not be called a General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. This is simply another God-awful trade treaty."

But if C-SPAN can claim to have made any stars, House Speaker Newt Gingrich, would have to be on the list. While in the minority, Gingrich and other House Republicans who were members of the Conservative Opportunity Society pioneered the use of C-SPAN during one-minute speeches and special orders in the 1980s to complain about the Democratic majority. It provided House Republicans with a forum to build grass-roots support for their cause outside Washington.

"Newt Gingrich probably wouldn't be Speaker without C-SPAN," Frantzich said.

After nearly three years in the minority, Democrats have yet to capitalize on C-SPAN to the same degree as Republicans, who used it to help them seize control of Congress in 1994, some observers say.

"The Democrats were late to come to understanding the power of it," said House Minority Whip David E. Bonior, D-Mich., who jokingly confesses that after he retires, he'd like to drive the C-SPAN school bus, a fully-equipped television production facility that travels the country for education and promotional purposes.

Lamb's Brainchild

C-SPAN began televising House floor proceedings in 1979 to about 3.5 million households, moving to 24-hour-a-day broadcasting in 1982. One of its early champions was then-Rep. Al Gore, now vice president, who pushed House Speaker Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill Jr., D-Mass. (1953-87) to back the idea. The House in 1977 approved a resolution endorsing live television coverage of its proceedings, paving the way for broadcasting to begin two years later.

The tradition-bound Senate resisted the idea even longer because Long threatened a filibuster every time supporters tried to bring it up for a vote. It was the Senate's chief traditionalist, Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., who eventually persuaded Long not to filibuster a resolution, according to the book Frantzich wrote with John Sullivan. The Senate voted in February 1986 to conduct a trial run. Senators voted later that year to allow permanent live coverage.

Lamb created C-SPAN in order to provide Americans with an unfiltered look at how government policy is made. A former Nixon administration aide, broadcaster and print jour-

nalist, Lamb used his contacts in the cable industry from his job in the late 1970s as the Washington bureau chief for Cablevision magazine to gain financial support for his project. Despite his roots in government and ties to the cable industry, Lamb insists that C-SPAN is a purely journalistic entity.

The cable industry is the sole financial source for the network's operations. Most cable companies pay 6 cents per cable subscriber a month to support the network regardless of whether they actually offer the channels. C-SPAN's primary network is available to 71 million households. Nearly 50 million households have access to C-SPAN2, which televises the Senate when it is in session. (*Viewers*, p. 2946)

In September, a third channel, C-SPAN Extra, was launched to provide daytime coverage of congressional hear-



C-SPAN

In January 1947, three decades before C-SPAN, Sen. Claude Pepper, a Florida Democrat, introduced a resolution calling for radio broadcasts of Senate proceedings. The idea was treated with derision by Pepper's colleagues. "The Senate would never get down to business," said Rhode Island Democrat Theodore F. Green. "Everybody would be making speeches." Added New Hampshire Republican Charles W. Tobey: "There are some things I'd hate to have the public listen to."

ings, major speeches and other public affairs events.

In October, C-SPAN began its first foray into radio, going on the air on a Washington, D.C., station with audio feeds from its channels and other programming. The network purchased the station from the University of the District of Columbia for \$13 million. C-SPAN also has expanded to the Internet with a Web site that features video and audio feeds from its channels.

At the same time, C-SPAN's programming has grown more diverse, providing weekly segments from the British House of Commons as well as from Congress. Lamb also hosts Booknotes and has published his own book based on the interviews. Books are a growing focus for the network, and book publishing has figured prominently in its plans for future programming, according to spokesman Richard Fahle.

C-SPAN also is expanding its coverage of events and subjects outside of Washington. In July, the network sent its cameras to chronicle two days of life aboard an aircraft carrier off the California coast. In 1994, C-SPAN went to Illinois to cover a re-enactment of the 1858 Lincoln-Douglas debates.

Lamb has gotten approval from the network's board members to launch more channels, which could be devoted to more coverage of foreign governments, books or business.

But Lamb said the network's plans for expansion have been hampered by obstacles created by congressional passage of the "must-carry" provision in the 1992 cable act (PL 102-385), which has led some cable operators to drop C-SPAN in order to make space for other stations. The provision, which was upheld by the Supreme Court in March, requires cable systems to set aside some of their channel capacity for broadcast stations. Cable companies complain that it has led to shortages in channel capacity, forcing them to stop carrying some networks, such as C-SPAN. "We're very vulnerable [to being dropped] because we don't make money for anyone," said Lamb, who has resisted offers by lawmakers to tackle the problem legislatively. (*1992 Almanac*, p. 171)

C-SPAN got a boost in May when Leo Hindery, president of Tele-Communications Inc., the nation's largest cable operator, promised that all of its subscribers would have access to both C-SPAN and C-SPAN2 by 2000. ■

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LES BROWN'S ENCYCLOPEDIA OF TELEVISION

3rd Edition

Foreword by Ron Miller
Nationally syndicated TV critic for the
San Jose Mercury News



Detroit

Washington D.C.

London

Hope, and their friendly rivalry inspired several motion pictures in which they co-starred, notably the *Road* series.

CROSS, JOHN S. (d. 1976) ► FCC commissioner (1958-62) named to succeed Richard Mack when he was forced to resign in a scandal. Cross had previously been chief of telecommunications in the State Department. Cross's statement at his confirmation hearing during the height of the *ex parte* scandals, that he was "as clean as a hound's tooth," became an industry byword. He became an engineering consultant on leaving the FCC.

CROSS-OWNERSHIP ► any ownership interest in two or more kinds of local communications outlets by an individual or business concern, such as a newspaper's ownership of a television station or of a cable-TV system. Concern in latter years over media monopolies prompted the FCC to prohibit TV stations and telephone companies from owning cable systems in their service areas, TV networks from owning cable systems at all and existing newspapers from acquiring existing stations in the same cities. While the present rules "grandfather" the existing cross-ownership arrangement, they do not permit the sale of a newspaper and a television station to the same party, and co-owned radio and TV stations must find separate purchasers when sold if the license transfers are to be approved.

Upheld by the Supreme Court in the 1978 *FCC v. NCCB* decision, the FCC's rules remained technically intact through the deregulatory period of the 1980s and early 1990s. In practice, however, "waivers" became readily available upon request, at least until 1989, when Senators Edward Kennedy (D.-Mass.) and Commerce Committee chairman Ernest Hollings (D.-S. Car.) furtively inserted an amendment to the FCC's appropriations bill that prohibited adoption of more liberal waiver policies. The measure was declared unconstitutional in part because the U.S. Court of Appeals held that it was improperly aimed at a particular target—stopping the FCC from giving media mogul Rupert Murdoch permission to keep newspaper-TV cross-ownerships in Boston and New York (*News America Publishing Inc. v. FCC*). Even so, the new law created enough obstacles to force the former Australian (who had become a naturalized citizen so he could obtain FCC licenses) to sell off the *New York Post* and his Boston TV station.

In 1989 the FCC abandoned a proposal for complete elimination of its TV-radio cross-

ownership ban. Under congressional pressure, it opted for a "liberalized" waiver policy for the top 25 markets that was so liberally enforced that it amounted to repeal. In 1991 FCC chairman Alfred C. Sikes began twin "inquiries" into radio and TV ownership that he hoped would lead to repeal of all cross-ownership rules.

CRYSTAL, LESTER ► executive producer of the *MacNeil-Lehrer NewsHour* since 1983 and former president of NBC News. He had been v.p. of documentaries (1976-77) and for the three previous years executive producer of the *Nightly News*. He was named to head the division by Herbert Schlosser, after the ouster of Richard C. Wald; in turn, he was ousted in the Fred Silverman administration. He stayed on as senior executive producer of political and special news broadcasts.

Crystal joined NBC News in Chicago in 1963 as producer of the local newscast on WMAQ-TV, after having worked in the newsrooms of other stations in Chicago, Philadelphia, and Altoona, Pa. He later was associated with the *Huntley-Brinkley Report*, predecessor to the *Nightly News*, as a regional manager, field producer, London producer, news editor and producer.

C-SPAN (CABLE-SATELLITE PUBLIC AFFAIRS NETWORK) ► non-profit basic-cable network created in 1979 by some of the larger cable MSOs to give their new medium a unique public service component, namely live, gavel-to-gavel coverage of U.S. House of Representatives proceedings (C-SPAN II, launched in 1986, covers Senate proceedings). The network was developed by Brian Lamb, whose approach to news is to show rather than tell. When Congress is not in session, C-SPAN airs varied Washington forums and conferences. Lamb himself, who is president of C-SPAN, hosts interview programs such as *Booknotes* and *America & the Courts* as well as several viewer call-in programs. The two public affairs channels are supported wholly by the cable industry and are widely respected.

CTAM (CABLE TELEVISION ADMINISTRATION AND MARKETING SOCIETY) ► professional organization devoted to the education and professional development of executives in the cable industry. Founded in 1975, it has a membership of about 2,500 cable system and cable programming executives. CTAM holds an annual conference with seminars and exhibits, plus a series of management seminars, sales

C-SPAN

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STEVE SCULLY

Re:

Pages (including cover sheet):

Date:

Comments:

THANK - YOU

If any transmission problems occur, please call (202) 626-7959.

TO: MATT STUMPF
The White House

FR: STEVE SCULLY
C-SPAN

Thank you for putting this together for C-SPAN's upcoming
20th anniversary celebration, scheduled for Thursday, March 25th.

As we discussed on the phone, our objective is for President Clinton
to be funny, and poke fun a little at us. If he has any other
anecdote that he wants to add, or if you have a few jokes you want
to include, go for it.

Questions...call me at (202) 626-7956 or at home (703) 690-9379.

I appreciate all your help.

Steve

To Brian Lamb...the C-SPAN Board of Directors...
and all of you who work every day to educate the
rest of the country on government, politics and public
policy issues...I want to congratulate you on 20
remarkable years.

I'm sorry I can't be with you in person, but Hillary and
I send our best wishes on C-SPAN's anniversary and
all that you've accomplished since first going on the air
in 1979.

You know, we've both been C-SPAN junkies for quite some
time. And I'm well aware that you folk's are unlike
anyone else in the television news business.

I remember being on a call-in program years ago telling
your audience on all that we were doing in Arkansas. On one
of the programs in the mid 1980's one caller even said she
thought I should run for President. At first, I thought it was
my mother phoning in.

C-SPAN is the only network to consider my
one hour, ten minute STATE OF THE UNION Speech
to be a sound bite...

and to televise every minute of the 1995 candidates debates.
Who cares that your candidates were Abraham Lincoln and
Stephen Douglas...and you were 131 years late for the
election?

In Fact.....

C-SPAN is the one network that didn't think my dog,
Buddy, was a lead story...

But...Thinks my press secretary's daily briefings are a prime
time ratings grabber. When Joe Lockhart informed of
this the other day, he then asked me for a pay raise.

There's always been one question I've always wanted to ask someone at C-SPAN...

How have you been able to get John Glenn to host "BOOKNOTES" every Sunday night....or is that Sen. John McCain who does the program. I get them confused.

By the way, Hillary often reminds me that her book made it on the program before mine.

(Eds note: This is an on-going joke by those who confuse Brian Lamb with McCain / Glenn... the Board and C-SPAN employes will get it.)

With C-SPAN and C-SPAN 2.....you give the president a chance to change channels on Congress...and I like that from time to time.

Congratulations to all of you for 20 years of C-SPAN. From the cable industry, which has been behind your efforts from the beginning... and continues to show it's strong support as their gift to America... and to all 250 employees who keep your networks, your radio station and now your popular web site running... 24 hours a day...7 days a week.

No other country in the world has an information source quite like it.

Since you first went on the air, C-SPAN has provided the rest of us with more than 300-thousand hours of speeches, Congressional hearings, political conventions and thoughtful discussions on the issues of the day.

And it's all the more remarkable because it's done by the private industry, instead of through any government mandate.

C-SPAN is a real American success story.

Happy Anniversary...and my best wishes for your next
20 years.

C-SPAN gets Pushy Brian Lamb's Channel of record Wants it All

by Ronald D. Elving

Sixteen years after its founding in a suburban apartment building, C-SPAN (the Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network) pumps out 17,530 hours of public affairs programming annually. The basic C-SPAN channel, which covers the House of Representatives, is available to 63 million homes, while C-SPAN 2, covering the Senate, reaches 39 million. Both also carry call-in interview programs and a broad range of public-affairs coverage. Ready to be launched later this year, at first only in the Washington area, is C-SPAN 3, for congressional committee meetings and other events. Two more channels are

planned, one for coverage of business and finance, and one for foreign governmental coverage. Viewer surveys have found that more than one American in four watched something on C-SPAN at least once last year. By its very existence, C-SPAN changes the way citizens perceive and react to politics.

Yet when its founder and chairman, Brian Lamb, interviewed Robert McNamara in April, the former secretary of defense asked, rather sheepishly, just what C-SPAN was. Despite growth and heightened profile, C-SPAN remains something of a mystery to many, even within its own regular audience. Misconceptions about its mission, function, and financing abound.

C-SPAN still inhabits a murky medial space between government and journalism. It exists as a public service, but it belongs to the profit-making cable industry. C-SPAN personnel identify themselves as journalists

Ronald D. Elving is political editor of Congressional Quarterly. His book, Conflict and Compromise: How Congress Makes the Law, was published in June.

ERIC FREELAND

("I have always considered myself first and foremost a journalist," says Lamb), yet their corporate mission statement specifically forswears "editing, commentary, or analysis."

The network strives to keep itself free of bias and eschews the cult of personality as well. Its on-camera personnel, led by Lamb himself, do not even speak their own names on the air; an overvoice as a program starts and a periodic superscript identify them. Lamb has discouraged the expression of personal political views even in off-camera newsroom bull sessions. Yet in recent months, he has been extraordinarily outspoken in his continuing efforts to gain greater access and control of coverage in Congress. He sees that as a crucial part of his larger mission: to reveal the capital city to the nation. Ultimately he wants to show not just the open hearings and news conferences but the Cabinet meetings, the congressional dealmaking sessions, and the negotiations backstage at the Supreme Court — not to mention the editorial conferences of various newspapers and news bureaus.

Renowned for his mild-as-milk demeanor on camera, he becomes exercised when he talks about those who resist coverage, in government or outside. (He got the Radio-TV Correspondents' Association to permit live cameras at the group's annual dinner, and he has been trying for a decade to persuade the sixty journalists of the exclusive Gridiron Club to take the same step.) His goal is the video equivalent of Adolph Ochs's legendary admonition to his first editors at *The New York Times*: "I want it all."

Yet if what Lamb has fashioned at C-SPAN is a power base, it is like no other. It does not compete with anyone, because no one else does what C-SPAN does. It does not sponsor celebrity parties or prestige reception rooms at media dinners. Regarding itself more as a public service, it does not even market or promote its personalities.

If C-SPAN is like anything, it is most like Lamb himself. He is rarely

seen at dinner parties, embassy receptions, or other events where contacts are forged or exploited. His salary, in the \$200,000 range, suggests a college president more than a network chief executive. In person, he can be affable and engaging, but on camera he wears a mask of detachment — the Rogerian therapist sitting silently by while callers share their feelings.

Partly because C-SPAN is like no other network, much of what people think they know about it turns out to be wrong. It is not, for example, an electronic elder-care center. Three-fourths of its audience is under fifty.

Lamb's mission is to reveal the capital city to the nation. But is it journalism?

"A lot of the call-in show participants are retired white males who sound pretty conservative," said Sarah Trahern, who was a spokeswoman and senior producer at C-SPAN until this summer, when she left for a job at The Nashville Network (TNN). "But the surveys show the demographics are pretty close to the country as a whole." The gender split is close to 50-50, for example, and the median household income of \$40,000 is solidly middle class. About one-third of the viewers call themselves independents, and the

rest are equally divided between the two major parties.

For his part, Lamb finds two other misconceptions particularly bothersome. One is that the network is either a government agency or at least partly dependent on public financing, like PBS or NPR. Lamb's sensitivity on this point is understandable, especially because some cable operators complain that they get little public-relations boost from sponsoring C-SPAN. That is why the words "funded entirely by America's cable television companies as a public service" appear alongside the corporate logo wherever possible — on company signs, business cards, press kits, T-shirts, tote bags, and coffee mugs.

Lamb is galled most, though, by the assumption, shown in viewer surveys, that C-SPAN already controls the cameras that record House and Senate floor debates. In fact, the cameras are owned and operated by Congress, and the staff who control them are chosen by the members, responsible to no one else, and sharply limited in what they can show of the goings-on in either house. Lamb says the arrangement constitutes a serious deception in which C-SPAN is reluctantly complicit.

The setup goes back to the late 1970s, when Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. first agreed to let cameras in the House, provided that they be run by people working for him. He also insisted on gavel-to-gavel coverage of floor debates, with specific requirements: the cameras would show whoever was speaking, the presiding officer or, during votes, the well of the chamber. They were not to show the vote board, where hundreds of red and green lights indicate how each member has voted. They were not to pan the chamber — a spacious auditorium where members often gather along the walls and aisles to talk, laugh, smoke, and strategize — or mix in reaction shots of members who were not speaking.

The three broadcast networks then covering the Hill all refused to carry the feed on that basis, holding out for some arrangement that factored in their own news judgment.

That impasse created the opening for Lamb, who was then Washington bureau chief for the trade magazine *Cablevision*. A former UPI reporter and Navy press officer, Lamb had been trying for years to sell cable system operators on public affairs. With Congress as the anchor for the programming, they bought the idea. And Lamb, swallowing hard, accepted O'Neill's rules. "In the beginning it was the only way we could get in," he explains. He started with four employees, a makeshift studio, and a daytime link to 3.5 million households nationwide. He built his first studio set himself, and its C-SPAN sign sometimes fell down.

"I remember doing one of his first interview shows in 1980," says Jack Nelson, Washington bureau chief for the *Los Angeles Times*. "We sat in two straight-back chairs in this little apartment in Arlington and I said 'Brian, how many people are watching this?' And he said: 'About fourteen.'"

Now, at fifty-three, Lamb and the 200 employees of his personal invention work in a studio and offices in a prestige building that affords splendid views of the Capitol and its grounds. C-SPAN has a \$24 million budget from the cable industry, which sees it as an inexpensive way to fill channels — pennies per subscriber, usually as part of the basic cable package. The industry also gets at least a little favorable public relations for performing a public service. Viewership has risen dramatically over the last several years — the estimated number of viewers has quadrupled since 1987 — in part because of the increased attention paid to Congress in other media. But it could always be argued that those other media are paying more attention to Congress because of C-SPAN.

Stephen Hess, a Brookings Institution scholar who has followed media and politics in Washington since the Eisenhower administration, views the cameras in Congress as a net plus. He says the initial concerns about show business cheapening House and Senate floor deliberations have not been borne out. "We have a few grand-

standers and showboaters, but I don't think the floor is a less important place," he says. "If people are turned off by politics, I don't think cameras can take the blame. They're messengers, and pretty neutral ones at that."

In the 1980s, as it developed programming outside the halls of Congress, C-SPAN began sending camera crews to follow candidates, both congressional and presidential. The style was as low-key as the telecasts from Washington. There were long shots of would-be officeholders waiting for a chance to shake hands at a plant gate when the shifts changed. But there were also remark-

Contrary to what viewers think, the cameras in Congress are owned and operated by Congress itself

able debates featuring candidates otherwise rarely seen on television. Other networks took a glance at an Iowa caucus; C-SPAN stayed until it was over.

C-SPAN has also upgraded the journalistic value it adds to the feed. Beginning in the House on swearing-in day, January 3, a new technical team began augmenting the feed not just by identifying the speakers but by describing the legislation in informational on-screen superscripts. The classical music tapes that had covered the sound of the chamber during these

interludes have been replaced with the "natural sound" of the floor in the midst of a vote. Inset screens now play back key moments from the preceding debate (or from other events) during the "walking time" when members are coming to the floor and casting their votes. "We don't tell our audience what they are seeing while they are seeing it, but we will try to explain during breaks," says senior vice president Susan Swain, whose face, after Lamb's, may be the one most familiar to C-SPAN viewers.

The network has also gone on-line; users of the Internet can order for downloading copies of bills and biographies of individual members.

As for those cursed rules on covering floor debates, Lamb thought the new Republican tide would wash them away. After all, Newt Gingrich had embraced the cameras a decade earlier, making long speeches on C-SPAN after the rest of the House had gone home. "He used C-SPAN," says Hess, "to go after the Democrats, to put Congress into disrepute and to bring down a speaker" — Jim Wright, who resigned in 1989 following allegations of ethical transgressions.

After the 1994 elections, Gingrich was calling for greater openness in the House, and on the Senate side, Majority Leader Bob Dole welcomed Lamb's ideas in a floor speech. "It seemed like a time to take them at their word," Lamb says.

Lamb had a shopping list ready: all committee meetings open to cameras, including hearings and the "mark up" sessions where members amend and vote on bills before floor debate; access to the conference committees where selected members of each chamber meet to thrash out the differences between the House and Senate versions of a bill; camera coverage of the speaker's morning chats with reporters and the "dugout chatter" between Senate leaders and the press; a camera set up just off the floor of each chamber for interviews with members arriving and departing.

Most of all, he wanted to control the camera coverage of floor debates. "The real motivation behind all this

was to open up the last stop for legislation — the floor of the House and Senate — to journalistic cameras," Lamb says.

For a time, Lamb was seeing nothing but green lights — cameras at Gingrich's daily briefing for reporters, a camera just off the floor, cameras allowed to pan the chamber and show reaction shots (but still controlled by House employees). With members warned in advance, the loosened rules were tried in late March during a racially charged debate over welfare reform. Then things started to fall apart. Members in both parties suddenly had reservations. Thirty-one Republicans signed a letter asking Gingrich to go back to showing whoever was speaking, period. Democrats were also leery, raising questions like these: What if the roving camera eye found a group of members smiling and joking in some part of the sprawling House chamber during a speech on a deadly serious subject? Or Democrats and Republicans quietly working together off to one side? Or members smoking cigarettes somewhere else?

Even those Lamb thought would be "okay with it" were "just the opposite," he says. "They started telling me all sorts of reasons it was a bad idea."

In May, peeved by reporter questions he regarded as "speeches," Gingrich decided he did not want cameras at his morning briefings after all and canceled the briefings altogether. Soon Dole, facing strong opposition to any change in coverage, deep-sixed his morning dugout sessions entirely. Some wide shots are still allowed in the House, but they are sharply restricted.

"When it comes to a politician's image, there's always a conflict between his desire to control it and the journalist's desire to portray it," says Lamb. "That's natural, it's been going on forever. And if there's not more public outcry or for that matter journalistic outcry from our colleagues in this business it's going to be easier and easier" to ban any cameras the politicians cannot control.

He has some support from broad-

casters. "We clearly have an interest in what Brian has been trying to do," says Robin Sproul, ABC Washington bureau chief. "None of us think the general public is well served by the seven cameras as they are now operated" in the House. "You can't even tell if the chamber is empty or full, or whether anyone is paying any attention." Sproul describes the live House chamber as "a vital, interesting, fascinating place to be," adding: "We want that same feeling, and we don't get that now."

Barbara Cochran, Washington bureau chief for CBS, notes differences between Lamb's mission and those of broadcast news operations. "He's covering the Congress," she says, "whereas we have to cover the world." What she wants is the chance to get good camera shots on those special occasions when Congress makes the kind of news that will make network air. "We're interested in better access on a spot basis," she says, as was done this year for the State of the Union address. CBS provided pool coverage for the speech that was used by all the commercial news networks. One camera was allowed to move around on the floor, and among other things captured Gingrich making asides to staff people during the speech.

Sarah Trahern can produce countless quotations from journalists thanking C-SPAN for its contributions to campaign and congressional coverage. Yet now and again there arises the question: Is C-SPAN journalism? If an information service explicitly rejects editing and analyzing, can it be called, strictly speaking, a news organization?

The question has been raised even in the correspondents' galleries at the Capitol, where reporters place a high value on C-SPAN but sometimes wonder whether it is in their business or not. "Some have questioned whether C-SPAN should even be credentialed by the news galleries," notes Kenan Block, a producer for *The MacNeill/Lehrer NewsHour* and chairman of the Radio-TV Correspondents' Galleries.

Block has given the question some

thought and settled on calling C-SPAN "journalism in the raw," with "a certain Zen quality."

"It's not adversarial," Block adds. "But their questions are often very compelling and insightful."

For some, Block's summary would amount to unleavened praise.

"Brian Lamb is trying to single-handedly pull American journalism back to what it is supposed to be," says Jeremy Rosner, a senior associate with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace studying the media and congressional policy-making.

C-SPAN will never compete with *60 Minutes* for pith and punch, but those who have wearied of the conventional broadcast news style often appreciate a long soak in its experiential reality. It has been called video verité, a variant on the documentary film that points the camera at a subject without narration or comment. But the art of such films is in their editing, and C-SPAN generally edits little if at all. That difference eliminates the winnowing and directing that journalists generally regard as their contribution. C-SPAN is obviously the product of a thought process, but to some journalists, the process looks unfinished. They watch C-SPAN with frustration, wishing it would stretch and flex. Even if C-SPAN does not wish to comment on congressional works and personalities, why not at least try to sort Congress out? Why not rank its myriad events and bills by relative importance, explain what is at stake, point up patterns and trends? By nature, reporters and editors long for editorial value added, for summation that aspires to make sense of it all.

But Brian Lamb has found a remarkable degree of success by following his own instincts and style.

"They've brought a lot of people into the process, and they're bringing people an unfiltered view of what goes on," says Jack Nelson. "It may not really be journalism, but it's real communication. And it's communicating what government is really all about." ♦

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C-SPAN MISSION

MILESTONES IN C-SPAN HISTORY
THE COMPANY
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THE COMPANY

C-SPAN is a private, non-profit public service of the cable television industry. Even though the network's programming covers the political process, it receives no funding from any government. C-SPAN earns its operating revenues through license fees paid by cable systems that offer the network to their customers.

The cable television industry created C-SPAN (Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network) in 1977 to provide live, gavel-to-gavel coverage of the U.S. House of Representatives. Since those early days, C-SPAN has grown into a diverse information service that provides public affairs programming 24 hours a day in a variety of formats. Today the cable industry remains the primary distributor of the C-SPAN networks and continues that distribution as a service to the public.

C-SPAN is a nonprofit educational organization with a board of directors comprised of executives from large and small cable television operating companies. While the board establishes network policy and provides financial oversight, it is not involved in C-SPAN's editorial decision-making.

When the U.S. House of Representatives turned on its cameras on March 19, 1979, C-SPAN and its staff of four were ready to carry the signal live, gavel to gavel, to 3.5 million cable homes. In 1980, C-SPAN covered its first presidential election and pioneered the nationwide viewer call-in program. By 1982, C-SPAN's schedule expanded to 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Today, C-SPAN has a staff of 260; its round-the-clock programming is available to 70 million TV households via nearly 6500 cable systems.

In June 1986, the U.S. Senate began televising its proceedings, and the cable industry created C-SPAN2 to telecast Senate debates. In addition to live Senate debates, C-SPAN2 offers long-form coverage of current events and issues. And exclusively on C-SPAN2, viewers can find a Friday evening business block; Road to the Capital's weekend coverage of state politics; and About Books - five hours of events and discussion about the latest non-fiction books and their authors.

C-SPAN EXTRA is the newest addition to the C-SPAN television networks. Launched in 1997, C-SPAN Extra provides public affairs audiences with access to televised coverage of an additional live event from Washington each weekday between the hours of 9am and 6pm ET.

In September 1989, the C-SPAN Audio Networks launched to give cable companies a unique new offering for their audio packages. C-SPAN Audio One carries a full selection of English-language foreign newscasts from around the globe. C-SPAN Audio Two offers a simulcast of the renowned BBC World Service.

C-SPAN RADIO 90 is the newest member of C-SPAN's non-commercial, public affairs family. Formally known as WCSP-FM, the station operates at 90.1 on the FM dial and can be heard by listeners within a 90 mile radius of Washington, DC and here on the internet. The station offers a mix of programming from all the C-SPAN networks and a few exclusives of its own; Presidential History each Saturday afternoon at 3pm and rebroadcasts of the commercial network's Sunday public affairs.