

LIFE'S LIKE THAT By FRED NEHEP



"Don't get too close to me... I have cavities!"

TV CANDIDS
by
Terrence O'Flaherty

SANTA MONICA—Pay television will soon become a fact here in this conservative California community which provides Hollywood with its closest seaside sandbox. The first lines will be installed shortly, and the entertainment is scheduled to begin in about 14 months.

Pay-TV has been given test runs in several areas, but this is the first system to be tested in the United States which uses telephone wires to bring the picture into the house. Your present free-TV pictures come via the air to your antenna.

The name of the company formed to provide Santa Monica with a pay television system is Home Entertainment Co., Inc., of Los Angeles.

Because it is a wired system instead of an air system it is a utility and comes under the jurisdiction of the Public Utilities Commission—not the FCC. The PUC has given Home Entertainment full approval.

The Santa Monica experiment is an important innovation and the association of Wendell Corey as president of Home Entertainment Co. will lend stature to the debut because Corey is also president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences as well as currently playing the lead in "The Eleventh Hour," a TV series devoted to psychiatry as it is practiced at M-G-M.

In its recent first demonstration, a typical week's program was described as including "West Side Story" (\$1.50); "Kid Galahad" (\$1); Philharmonic concerts (\$1); prize fights and ball games (\$1); stock market quotations (15 cents); and educational courses (25 cents).

Pay-TV is claimed to be the answer to the disappearance of quality programming from medium that is controlled by networks, sponsors and advertising agencies interested largely in selling products, yet there is little indication that this is going to be true.

The major staple of pay-TV in any form will be movies—and a look at the movie ads will give you an indication of the fare in today's films—most of which are best displayed in wide-screen theater and in color.

The producers and writers of such pictures are the same people who will turn their efforts toward pay-TV.

The financial element is another stumbling block. Will the average family—now hocked to the eyeballs for appliances and the TV set itself—be willing to stand the additional burden of several hundred dollars a year?

Hollywood is already betting heavily that it will.

As Corey said recently: "The background of our programming will be feature pictures—new movies made in Hollywood. Ask any actor, any prop man, any guy in movies what this will mean to the industry. It means we won't be making one picture for \$34 million but 34 pictures for \$1 million each...."

And if you think the Big Boys aren't behind it, just look at these corporations whose representatives endorsed the trial: General Telephone, General Electric, RCA and American Electronic Labs.

The most disturbing aspect of pay-TV is this: It will undoubtedly cater to home box office popularity even more fiercely than the networks now rely on the audience ratings. Mediocrity is certain to be on the march.

But equally certain is the need for it to be tried.

If the people are willing to pay for something they now get for nothing, then pay-TV is entitled to take its place alongside the stage, motion pictures, radio and free-TV in the public affection.

Army Pvt. Donald G. Nielsen, son of Mr. and Mrs. Axel R. Nielsen, 5016 Lillian St., recently was assigned to the 8th U.S. Army in Korea.

Nielsen, a member of the 42nd Artillery's 1st Missile Battalion, entered the Army in August 1962, completed basic training at Ft. Ord, Calif., and was last stationed at Ft. Sill, Okla.

The 18-year-old soldier is a graduate of South High School.

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