

Assignment TV

By **TERRENCE O'FLAHERTY**

The flow of creative juices at the network executive level is a source of constant wonderment to me. Many years ago Steve Allen worked out a format called the "Tonight" show which has been passed down to Johnny Carson practically intact, a combination of interviews, personal advertisements, a house band and an occasional entertainer larded with constant commercial interruptions.

Thus the first plug-and-palaver show was born and has survived.

After several short starts with "P.M." Regis Philbin and Allen himself, the Westinghouse network and its subscribers now have an exact copy of the "Tonight" show even unto the placement of the chairs. Merv Griffin is the host, and it has been successful. The two shows are now running simultaneously, and the talent, at times, runs pretty thin.

SEVERAL years ago ABC devised its own late night marathon, with Les Crane at the throttle. Its amphitheater setting was refreshing, but the show folded. Last year ABC announced it will enter the late night field with The Joey Bishop Show in April. Its format? Similar to the "Tonight" show.

Okay, that's three running together with the same sort of show — Merv, Joey and Johnny.

Next, a new collection of stations called the Overmyer Network, operating on the Las Vegas-Miami circuit, announced its late night show originating in Las Vegas. It will start in April alongside the Joey Bishop Show—making four.

This week CBS came up with a great new idea. You guessed it — a late night, 90-minute program to run against Johnny, Joey, Merv and Overmyer! It will not be on the air until the spring of next year.

So that makes five 90-min-

ute gossip-and-music programs back to back. Where will they find the guest participants? After all, you can stretch Hermione Gingold and Buddy Hackett just so far . . .

MY FRIEND Peter Hurd may go down in history as the first painter to have his works discussed in both Time and Newsweek under "National Affairs" instead of "The Arts." The controversy over his portrait of the President certainly did "die hard," as he expressed it. And while we're on the subject of presidents, NBC has announced that William Manchester, author of the most discussed book of the generation, "The Death of a President," will be interviewed in a special one-hour edition of "Meet the Press" on Sunday, February 12. It is Manchester's first national interview since the controversy arose over his book.

WITH THE author's book certain to be a best seller—in addition to the Look magazine serialization and endless fringe benefits—I begin to realize the truth of ABC newsman William Lawrence's statement to me:

"When Mrs. Kennedy asked Manchester if he would write the book it was as if she had handed him a check for one million dollars . . ."

NBC will replace "The Andy Williams Show" with "The Saint," a long-running British Adventure series on May 21. The contract with Williams has run out and the singer will probably do specials in the future rather than a series.

Marine Pfc. Gregory P. Collins, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. Collins of 2132 W. 169th Place, has completed the Radio Telegraph Operator's Course at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, Calif.

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