

Copenhagen Free University #14

Guerilla Television and Activist Video: A view from the last 35 years

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Introduction

By Carolyn Faber

While television was coming of age in the late 1960's, the introduction of the first portable video camera and recorder, the Sony Portapak, tore open the barriers between television producers and consumers. Video production became portable and for the first time tapes could be edited and played back on location immediately, reused and manipulated making video production a relatively affordable, cost-effective and timely process. It put the tools of television production into the hands of artists, activists and others who recognized its potential as a tool for social change. Up to this point, all video production and content was limited to television studios and stations controlled by large corporations.

Early adopters of portable video technologies, such as Raintance Corporation, Videofreex, TVTV, Ant Farm and others, wanted to use the tools of television production to challenge and ultimately change the dominant corporate structures of TV production, transmission and reception. They were media activists, and the center of what became the Guerrilla Television movement.

Inspired by "...Teilhard, McLuhan, Bateson, McCulloch, Wiener and others, they developed the premise that if one could understand how our culture used information, one could devise a mix of strategies, using 1/2" video equipment, to leverage the rigid world information order of the time. They thought reversing the process of television, giving people access to the tools of production and distribution, giving them control of their own images and, by implication, their own lives - giving them permission to originate information on the issues most meaningful to themselves - might help accelerate social and cultural change." (*Introduction to Radical Software, Volume 1, Number 1, 1970 - <http://www.radicalsoftware.org/e/volume1nr1.html>*)

As a participant in the Guerrilla Television movement and a founding member of the groundbreaking video collective TVTV, Tom Weinberg is still driven by the movement's core principles. He has spent more than 35 years pursuing one goal: change the world through television. Throughout his career he has encouraged independent thinking through creating and distributing independently produced non-fiction video. From his work with TVTV, to Ant Farm's legendary *Media Burn* event, *Image Union*, *The '90s*, and most recently The Media Burn Independent Video Archive, that single thread binds a diverse and exhaustive body of work.

His work with TVTV, as a founder of Chicago's Center for New Television, and as producer of the nationally broadcast series *The '90s*, has made him a significant figure in the history of independent video. With each new technology since the Portapak he has advocated a more democratized media, pursuing innovative ways to bring independent voices to new audiences.

In 2003 Tom founded The Media Burn Independent Video Archive in order to preserve his vast collection of videotapes, which includes the works of hundreds of independent producers. In October 2006, the archive's website mediaburn.org launched as the first and only online archive dedicated to exhibiting the work of independent videomakers of the past 35 years. Over 500 full-length videos are currently streaming online, free, for anyone to see. The technology finally caught up with the vision to bring independent ideas to global audiences.

Just prior to the launch of mediaburn.org, Tom and I discussed his early work and what mediaburn.org means in the context of his long career, and what the future might hold. I first met Tom in 1990, as a production assistant on *The '90s*. In 2004, as a film and video-archivist, I reconnected with him to help organize the archive. The interview and documents presented here are an overview of Tom's early years with TVTV, the Chicago Area Videomakers Coalition, and the creation of the Chicago Editing Center/Center for New Television. We also discussed his work distributing independent media as creator of the television series *Image Union*, and *The '90s*.

Special thanks to Tom Weinberg and Sara Chapman, Director of the Media Burn Archive, for their assistance.

Conversation with Tom Weinberg

By Carolyn Faber

Carolyn Faber: What first made you think that you could make television?

Tom Weinberg: When did I first know? I wanted to make television and the only way to make television was at a television station, so I went to work at a television station. And I worked there for a year, two years or something and then I went to the Alternate Media conference at Goddard College, Vermont. I went with the people from the Seed, which was the alternative newspaper in Chicago at the time. I mean there were a lot of alternative people around doing things that were either radio or print or so on. And I found these people, and I met up with them at Goddard College and they had a videotape of Buckminster Fuller. It was like a whole hour of regular people just talking with him – the very people who I was sitting there with. Well, how did you do that? Well then they showed me this Portapak and it was like Oh my god we can do this! We can make TV without the television station, without any interference from anybody, without any money from anybody – essentially – without intervention. That's when I knew. And I went nuts, almost literally at that point. I went nuts partly because all these people were there for 2 or 3 days who were in music and all kinds of – you know, it was my first exposure to gays who were really out and militant, to the Puerto Rican activists, to the Weather Underground. The Videofreex were there, Ant Farm was there – and I didn't know that. I didn't know even that until afterwards. OK. They said, "Were you there?" "Yeah, I was there, were you there?" and so on. But that was when I first knew.

CF: But most people from your generation grew up with television as a completely new technology and phenomenon – not everyone would think that they would want to make television or even could. So where did you make this connection that it was something that you *could* do, and *wanted* to do?

TW: I think one of the ways was that I could do audio. I was doing audio when I was a kid. Microphones, people talking, performing. Not so much performing actually, but interviewing, taping stuff off the air, talking to it and about it, cutting it, splicing audio together – so I knew the hands on part of it and video was no different in that sense. I mean it was a big difference because it's a conceptual difference...

CF: But the recording and the cutting process, the tactile part of it was the same.

TW: Right – so I knew that on some level inside me I mean for my own experience.

When I went to college I took a television course in my senior year – just to graduate. I could pick whatever I wanted, it was in the summer, I had to take two courses to get out of there, so I took two courses in television. So, it was the first time I ever had a course and I did it all on audio – this is 1965 or 66 – I did it all in audio and still pictures because there was no videotape available to anybody. And we put it on a machine, a balop machine it was called, which took the still pictures coordinated it with the edited sound and it was a TV show – sort of like Ken Burns.

CF: They had television courses at that time, already?

TW: It was the University of Michigan. They did. It was all studio production. Almost all studio production and [imitates low, authoritative booming voice] boom mikes and here's how you do it and the control room and...

CF: Did you follow the course or were you off doing your own thing?

TW: Well you had to do things in the studio but then the final project was anything you wanted to do I think. I got very involved; in fact I stayed and did it afterwards to finish it.

CF: What happened after college, did you go to work for a TV station after college?

TW: I went to graduate school in business. For two years in New York. And in that time I learned some things about video – like at the Howard Wise gallery. I saw some stuff that I hadn't seen before, but there was no – this was 66, 67, or 68 maybe – there was no portable video. It was performance, it was manipulating the image with electronics and, you know, there was some cool stuff but it wasn't what we do which is about people, and events, and non fiction, changing the world and all those kinds of things.

CF: So how did you respond to what you were seeing in the galleries at that time?

TW: I thought it was really cool but I don't know – it didn't spark like "oh my god this is the greatest thing ever." But it clearly opened up some possibilities for what can be done. You know, that somebody was working in that as a form, as a way of doing things on video that's different from TV.

CF: So you spent a couple of years in business school in New York City and you were seeing this new video work and then what happened?

TW: I came to Chicago and I thought I was going to go into business. I actually thought I was going to go into my father's business, and then he died, and we sold the business. So I was kind of free – I was supposed to go into that business my whole life. So I was free and I had some money. And I decided to do what I really wanted to do – not go into business or investment banking. I went to work at Channel 26, which was the first UHF station and it was run on a shoestring at the time. All day long it was a stock market and business show – which is why they hired me because I knew enough to do that. You know, I booked guests and I was on the air a little saying what the stocks are – every hour the stocks that were doing. And then I did a news show there – they started the first black news show and they made me the producer of this black news show, every night at 10:00. And it was a great experience. It lasted maybe 6 or 9 months and I had a fight with the management because they didn't support me with the talent. And I mean, I wasn't exactly the most experienced producer but we were doing ok.

CF: What was the show?

TW: It was called *A Black's View of the News*. Roy Wood was the newscaster he was from WVON and a kind of a senior guy – went on to become head of the Black Audio Network. Don Cornelius did the sports – he went on to do Soul Train and other things like that. And Janet Langheart was the weather girl – that's what she was called at the time. And she wanted to do horoscopes instead of the weather every night. And, I did something there that I had done when I was a sports editor in Michigan at the college daily – which is – every night I would write a crit sheet, a review of what we did right and wrong, trying to develop the show. And one night I wrote to one of the people, "You HAVE to be on time. The show starts at 10:00. It's TV. You can't walk in at one minute after ten and think we're gonna..." Well he came in the next day (I don't believe I'm telling this story) and he says, "You can shove this motherfucker right up your ass if you don't like it". Verbatim. And I said, "Wait a minute". And I walked out, and went to the management, to the program director actually, and then the owners. I told them the story and they said: "Well, we don't want to lose him". And I said: "Well you just lost me". So that was the end of Channel 26.

CF: So were you just looking around for work after that?

TW: Yeah – I think we did the first Channel 11 piece shortly after that – we, meaning me and my friend Mitchell Klein. This was before Porta-Paks I think, so we shot on film. It was in the studio, and the segments were on film. It was the only time I really cut film so it was probably 1970.

CF: Porta-paks were around.

TW: They weren't really in Chicago until Anda [Korsts] and I and Tedwilliam

[Theodore] got them all around the same time and I guess that was 1971. But in the meantime – I'm not really sure of the chronology – we did a show called *Hiring Line*. And the idea was to get jobs broadcast on the show, through whoever we could get jobs from – from the Illinois employment service and others – so they'd be on TV. Employers would be looking for people and we'd match them up with jobs, for people who didn't have jobs and needed them. And the other part of it was consumer education and teaching people how to not get bilked. So, *How to Buy a Car and not Get Taken for a Ride* was one of them. It was just a pilot – we did it once or twice – but I think it wound up being the show *Making It*. That was my first experience in public television, which in a way got me going there. I started to know people there and a little later I started producing shows there.

CF: So you came into contact with other people doing the same thing as you, or who wanted to do the same thing. Is that how you met Anda and Tedwilliam?

TW: Yeah, exactly. And then Anda and I collaborated with Jim Wiseman, another guy who knew the technology, to do *It's A Living*, which was based on Studs Terkel's book *Working*, which was new at the time – that's the first time I met him and worked with him. Maybe it was '74 and it was based on *Working*. We had six people in the hour; 3 were people who were in the book (the same people) and 3 were different. So we were trying to figure out how the TV version would work – we were experimenting. Then we did five more 1/2 hours after that. So the first one was on Channel 11, the local PBS station. It was on a few other channels and then it went to the PBS system where others could pick it up.

CF: Did you produce that with your own financing? Or did PBS do that? Or WTTW?

TW: No, WTTW didn't pay for it but they did give us services to take the 1/2" and turn it into a broadcast format – 2" I think. But the money came from the Illinois Humanities Council and maybe some from the NEA. And there was a law firm that Anda had a connection with that put up some of the cash. There wasn't a lot of cash there – we had the cameras and Porta-Paks, we had the editing units – nobody got paid more than a quarter.

CF: So, where does your work with TVTV fit in to this?

TW: Well TVTV started in '72 so that's what I was doing for 3 almost 4 years. I knew Michael Shamberg from when we were kids. We grew up in the next town from each other on the North Shore, and we actually went to Sunday school together, and so we sort of knew each other. And I had met him at Goddard because of his work with Raindance. He and Frank Gillette and Ira Schneider and Beryl Korot. So we had corresponded a little and talked on the phone about the idea of getting a whole lot of people together in one place, and lots of our

portable cameras and making a video out of that. And we decided to do the political conventions, which were both in Miami Beach in 1972. And so he came to Chicago and I remember we were sitting over at the Lawson YMCA for three hours trying to figure out what and how to get the money and so on. And that was like in March or April, May. And we did it in July and August. And then we edited it. We sort of invented this collage form of editing that had no voice over, and people speaking for themselves and trying not to have anything that was manipulative, you know – no cheap shots. But of course we learned from that because we had a lot of cheap shots. And I learned that that doesn't work and it doesn't feel right and you squirm. And so I've tried to avoid it ever since – I mean – consciously. Sometimes you can't. But it just doesn't work. And that was part of our – it was a whole education of how to edit, how to shoot, how to get people together. I remember I rented a big house with a big pool in Miami and there must have been 25 of us living in this place. It was big but it wasn't that big. And – I mean living there for a week to 10 days at a time – we had a good time, but we also learned a whole lot about how to do this. And we connected with people from all over the country. The qualification for going there was essentially to have a porta-pak. And we didn't know – nobody knew each other – almost. There was a network somehow – they knew them and they knew her and she knew her and she knew him. All of a sudden there were kids from Antioch, and Ant Farm was there – they drove in on a bus and I'd never seen anything like that.

So, Michael had written for Life magazine and he was – he was a journalist. And I had been doing journalism and some documentary stuff so we both had a fix on the organizing politics of it. But obviously it was all making it up as we went along, including the two shows that came out of that which were, *The World's Largest TV Studio* and *Four More Years*. *World's Largest TV Studio* was first and it's not as well known. But in a way it's almost more important because it's the first one and there are a lot of mistakes, there are a lot of problems.

CF: What came out of that experience?

TW: We called ourselves TVTV – Top Value Television. At the time there was something called Top Value Stamps, which they gave away in the stores, you know for coupons and stuff. So, it was a pun on TVTV (like the Danish tv-tv group). And somehow there was no formal entity of TVTV, it was completely catch as catch can for those conventions. Then we realized we were on to something and we moved to San Francisco and started TVTV as a company. We went through a certain – we actually raised some money and we had stock you know – we were trying to make a real company. And so right after that the first thing we did was *Adland*, which was a partnership. We got other people to put in their money, TVTV was a general partner, and then money came in from TV Lab at WNET in New York, which was a joint project in some ways of WGBH Boston and WNET. TV Lab was a seminal place for video in lots of ways. That's where Nam June Paik did all his work at the time and that's where the Vasulkas were,

that's where we were doing things all the time. The Videofreex did stuff down there – I say down there – it was in the basement of somewhere on the east side.

The next thing we did was the *Guru Maharaji* and then there was another one about the Cajuns and Mardi Gras season, which I was not directly involved in, and New Orleans – not really New Orleans but rural Louisiana. We did the *Superbowl* tape in 1975 and then *Washington Bureau*, which was three one-hour tapes where we really converged in almost the same way we did in Miami. And by that time we were more organized, we had people who were really shooters – like cinematographers. We had audio people who were audio people from film and – it became a lot more professional and a lot less spontaneous. At the beginning it was pure jazz. And it was amazing. After a while it became – the tapes might have been good, the product was definitely good – but at least from my point of view the involvement was not as fun. And there was money pressure there too, because you had to deliver.

CF: You were a bona fide company at that point.

TW: Yeah. We weren't much of a company but we were a company. Michael [Shamberg] and Allen Rucker and Megan [Williams]. But by that time the Ant Farm had completely pulled out of TVTV. They were there in '72 and '73 and Chip worked on *Adland* as a main person.

CF: What caused Ant Farm to pull away from TVTV?

TW: The reason there was a split was really there was no money. Nobody was paid hardly anything. \$50 here, or \$100 bucks there. And so we had a meeting, everybody together meaning all the Ant Farm people – maybe there were 12 or 15 altogether. And I remember Doug Michaels saying something like, 'Well we're not making any money, TVTV is getting all the publicity, Ant Farm is getting none. We were here before TVTV and if there's no money then what is there? There's image points. And we're getting no image points and we're getting no money so why should we keep doing it?' And so there was kind of a clash of founders, if you will, between him and Shamberg. And that's when Ant Farm went away from TVTV. They were still my friends and they were brilliant and when the *Media Burn* scheme came around I went for it, big time.

CF: And you were seen as turning against TVTV when you worked with Ant Farm on *Media Burn*?

TW: Well, I had grown away from them for various reasons. I was sometimes a liability because I didn't play – I had my own problems, which had nothing to do with them per-se, except that the environment was such that it was too much stimulation for me in some ways and so I just went bonkers for awhile. Plus there

were theoretical and principle things that I didn't necessarily go for. TVTV is a remarkably important step because it was brand new and because nobody had ever done it before and because it was a success on some level at the time. Those first tapes were shown on TV, actual commercial TV stations in all of the Westinghouse stations.

CF: TVTV was the galvanizing force?

TW: Galvanizing...it was just the first force. Yeah. And what happened to TVTV – I started to say this before – is that several of the people including Michael, who in general was the driving force and Megan, who became his wife, and Alan Rucker who they knew from Washington University in St. Louis (and they were all friends with Harold Ramis at that time in college), they decided they wanted to move to LA and make scripted TV. And I wasn't interested in that. You know– I didn't know about any of this stuff until 1971 and so now here we are 5 years later and they want to molt into something that's different, that's obviously valid and using the techniques and the portable video and all of that, to become TV shows and eventually movies.

But I was a convert. I believed the stuff from before. And I wasn't going to change that. I knew it was valid and I knew it was resonant with me. I never wanted to make a movie. I still don't. I shouldn't say never because there are some movies I kind of got involved in trying to make. But essentially, it wasn't films or fictional narrative movies that I was ever interested in. So when that happened that was the end of me at TVTV. I don't know when that was. 1976 or the end of '75.

CF: So let's come back to Chicago. How did all of this bear on video making in Chicago? Who was doing it, what were they into and how did you come into the equipment and the evolution of the Editing Center? How did that happen?

TW: The equipment was expensive – particularly the editing equipment. And when you had it you didn't use it all the time so there was a something of a sense of community among the people who were users of video. And I think we came together – probably the first three people who were involved were Scott Jacobs and Tedwilliam and I – and we had this idea of having editing and playback and sort of a community. Creating community is obvious in the Internet age but it wasn't so obvious then. And so we got the space on Hubbard Street, and had some editing equipment given to us by Roscor. Paul Roston. That was key at the time because we didn't have any money then. And people joined because they wanted that to happen. It was a cooperative in a sense there was only one or two people working there and the rest of it was run by us.

CF: How did you get that equipment donated? Did you tell him (Roston) you were doing social media or did it matter to him?

TW: He had a very good sense of what we were doing and he had a conscience. You know most of his business was corporate but he saw that the 1/2" that we were doing and the way we used it – technical, political or social or whatever – it was different and he bought it, he believed in it. He was young, you know we were all pretty young. He was in his 20s, they were just starting their business. But he had a vision for what he was doing in video and it blossomed, huge. So for him to give us a couple thousand dollars worth of stuff at a very low price – I think it was key but it was also based on his understanding.

I've done very little with him over the years but we're still in touch a little bit. I had lunch with him about a year ago, 6 months ago, and told him what we're doing [with the Media Burn Archive] and he was interested. The continuity of having the guy who first helped us to start out the Editing Center in 1977 and having the people that I met at TVTV originally that first week in Miami – Skip Blumberg, Nancy Cain, Eddie Becker – all these same people I've been working with making video for 30+ years – they're still my dear friends. See, there's a difference in style. If you work at CBS news you develop friendships. I mean, I worked at CBS sports for a little while and you develop close friendships. It's all for the business though. It's all for the corporate good of making the program, and CBS' ability to sell it and everybody doing their role. At the time that I was there – they did that very, very well. With us (TVTV) though, it was always a different thing – we worked with our friends. We worked with people and it became not just work, it was almost play. You know we stayed together, we drank together, we hung out together – it was a 24 hour thing almost in those days. And we liked – we loved each other. We grew and we learned from each other and it was just different. It was not corporate – it was fascinating. It was based on connection and friendship rather than accomplishment.

CF: Was there something different that you were trying to do with the Editing Center, when you started it, than you were doing with TVTV?

TW: Yes, the Editing Center was absolutely based in and local to Chicago – it was our community, it was our people. There were people from the projects who worked there, there were people from uptown, there were some artists. It was all Chicago. It was a Chicago phenomenon. And we brought in people sometimes from New York or Los Angeles or San Francisco because we had shows and we had the meetings and stuff.

CF: You had exhibitions there?

TW: Yeah.

CF: How often?

TW: Several a year – I don't know exactly. There was almost always something

playing in one of the rooms that people could come over and see. What happened there was that after about a year and a half we were up and going and it worked. People had to pay a little money to do what they were doing but it was affordable. You'd shoot, you get 20 hours of tape, you go in and you edit for 3 days. It was first come first serve sign-up, no discrimination between what your work was or who you were. Yeah there were certain negotiations involved in that but basically that was the underlying thing. So it was up and going and then at that point we were saying, "Well what happens to all these tapes? How come nobody's seeing 'em? We can play 'em in the other room, the social action people can play 'em in their community groups. But not the stuff that most of us were making." And so I think maybe the first thing was that we talked to Ed Morris at Channel 44 into putting a one-hour show together. We called it the Chicago Area Videomakers Coalition – which was most of the people from the Editing Center. And so there was a TV show. An actual TV show that people saw.

CF: How did you get Channel 44 to show work by local independent video makers, a new group that no one had heard of – you could have been anybody – how did you do that?

TW: It's hard. It's who you know. I knew the guy. And he knew this was something different, he knew it wasn't going to cost him much (almost nothing) and so he 'd do it. Plus, they had relatively little money and so they were trying new things all the time that were cheap. I'm not sure exactly how I got to know him before that but I did. And so we went to him and he went for it.

CF: And the Chicago Area Videomakers Coalition – you gave yourselves that name to help get yourselves out there collectively – it was easier to do it that way than as individuals?

TW: Oh yeah – for sure.

CF: Did you submit your work to other outlets that way?

TW: I'm not sure we did. Let's see, there was a TV show on Channel 11. Gene Siskel was the host. And it was called *Nightwatch*. And it was on about once a month – it was very irregular. It started at 11:00 at night and went until 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning. They showed independent film and video, and Gene was the host (This was way before *Sneak Previews* or *Siskel and Ebert*) and he would bring in people, whose work was on the show, including me. I was probably one of the more vocal ones at the time. I had a problem with that TV show because if you're going to show independently produced work the concept is not to be a critic of it and say why it's no good or what's wrong with it. It's to understand why it matters and where it's coming from and how it's remarkable that it could be done at all. It's not to be a critic – as far as we were concerned. There's room for

criticism on multi-million dollar films but not dirt-cheap community video or weird little video manipulations on the first computers. And I had a little confrontation with him on the air when I first showed *Media Burn*. That was the first time *Media Burn* had been on TV, I think.

You know a lot of this distribution stuff was what I did, more than most anybody. I mean, that was sort of my thing. Even with the first TVTV stuff I got it on – at least made the connection to – the Westinghouse stations which showed it in New York, Hartford, Philadelphia, and Boston and Miami and maybe one or two other places where they owned stations. But in Chicago Channel 11 was sort of where we belonged. It was public television, it had a certain cache in the community, they had pretty good ratings and everybody knew it and it had a cultural standing and so on. And I had already done some documentaries by myself over there by 1978 (maybe it was Joe Cummings and *the Overnight Man* and maybe Marzullo or something...).

CF: Those were shows you produced on your own that got broadcast on WTTW?

TW: Right, but in conjunction with them. It was their show. I was the freelance producer. And we had a contract and all the post-production was there. And their guys shot most of it. So I was more like a traditional producer at that time except I was shooting it the way we always shot stuff – verite, almost no narration.

CF: Was there anybody else doing that at that time in Chicago?

TW: I don't think so. Tom Palazzolo was doing stuff but it was coming from a whole different place – wonderful, but not the same. I don't think so but maybe there was.

Certainly not at channel 11. You know eventually Marian Marzynski and a few of those people got in there and made shows. Tom Finerty and Lily Ollinger, a little later we got them in there. Because I had been doing shows, I knew people over there – we invited them to the Editing Center. Do you know this story?

CF: I don't think so.

TW: It was early '78. We invited the boss – Bill McCarter, the head of Program Broadcasting, Dick Bowman and a couple other people to come and talk to us as the community. Well in those days television stations had to renew their licenses and had a little sense of having to really deal with community. And WTTW to their credit took that seriously, with or without the requirements, because they thought of themselves as grounded in Chicago – more so than the network owned stations that's for sure. And so they came into the Editing Center and we sandbagged 'em, essentially. We attacked them. About Gene Siskel and that *Nightwatch* show and about not having independent work seen on a regular basis on their air, and that they should because there was so much of it, it was

important, it was another point of view, it was socially responsible so on. And we had a group, there were quite a few people, maybe 20 people in this discussion and you know – they were battered. I mean they didn't expect that at all. And, it was pretty good. What came out of that was *Image Union*. Because I had done work there and because they knew me and because I was sort of the chairman of the Editing Center I was made the producer of *Image Union*, this new non-existent TV show for independents which they said they would put on the air every two weeks for an hour. And they thought there would be two or three shows and then there wouldn't be any more material and then we'd go away. Well – what is it now – 29 years later it's still on. I mean I'm not doing it anymore but there was no dearth of material – and there still isn't.

CF: It's amazing though that they went in there, you beat 'em up like that and they didn't just walk away.

TW: Yeah, it is pretty amazing but you know what – they're good people ultimately.

CF: They listened.

TW: Yeah, and they took what they were doing seriously, as Chicago people trying to be responsible.

CF: Did the Channel 11 people presume that since you were making independent work, you knew it best, you knew the people doing it, you probably knew better than they did about how to present it?

TW: Right, for sure, definitely.

CF: That kind of respect doesn't seem to exist anymore does it?

TW: [Laughing] No. Because everything, including Channel 11 is so corporate and so oriented around raising money, and spending money in a way that's controlled. There is fear of radical content, or even slightly progressive content, everybody's looking behind them and covering their ass so they can keep their jobs. Risk taking has taken a huge – it's gone away. Yeah, it's not the same.

CF: So how and why did the Chicago Editing Center become the Center for New Television?

TW: I think they're the same thing.

CF: It just got a new name?

TW: Yeah. The Editing Center was too limited a name because we were doing other things. We were doing exhibitions and other things. You know the thing that made the Center for New Television work for the first couple years was the government of the United States, and the CETA programs. CETA (Concentrated Employment and Training Act) was a program within the labor department. It was a way you could get funding for hiring young people essentially to do work and the government would pay half it of and you would pay half as a non-profit and that is what made dozens of alternative institutions – that didn't have any money and were undercapitalized – capable of existing in the late '70s and early '80s. It wasn't a lot of money but it was an inspiration and it was enough money to make a difference.

CF: It seems like you're always struggling to get the work distributed in some way – that it's not as hard to make the work as it is to get it seen. What was changing about that at the time of the Center for New Television?

TW: Well, it was selling – for lack of a better word. You know it was getting out to the people you could get out to and try to convince them that it was a good thing to do. It wasn't really for much money. It's not the kind of selling that goes on at NAPTE for syndicated programs. But there's some amount of convincing individual people that it's worthwhile doing. Whether it's Channel 11 or the original Westinghouse stuff or the TV Lab at WNET, we had to convince them that we were on an experimental edge. Or whether it's *Image Union* or PBS stations for *The '90s*. You know, for *The '90s* we had a guy who was on the phone 6-8 hours a day just talking to the stations to tell them about it and give them a pitch to make sure they at least considered putting it on. And we built it from 15-20 stations to over 200 in 2-3 years.

CF: *The '90s* seems like your greatest success as far as getting independent work seen.

TW: Yeah people still say that. *The '90s* was 1989 - 1993 and we did 52 1-hour broadcasts. And for a while we were doing one a week. You know I talk to Joel Cohen now and he says, "I don't know how the hell we did that". I don't know how the hell we did that. But we did it. It was clearly the most successful of that kind of genre for sure and the main reason that it could exist at all was that we got lots of money from the MacArthur Foundation. It was a good investment by that foundation, and then there was a little money from other foundations. Then we determined and committed ourselves to try and get the show on the PBS stations which we succeeded quite remarkably well in. Then the PBS and CPB have a program fund together and we became part of that. We were funded by that for a year and that was '92. That's when we did all the political shows and after we did the political shows there was no more money. The CPB gets its money from the Congress and '92 was obviously an election year and they were not going to

have any controversial political shows. They just didn't want to fund that. They wouldn't do that. That wasn't your question – you were asking about *The '90s* as a success.

CF: That's ok – that makes me think about MacArthur – they funded the production of *The '90s* when there was no guarantee anyone was going to put it on the air?

TW: John Schwartz had founded a new TV station, which was KBDI in Denver, Channel 12. It was the first real alternative broadcast TV channel. Very little funding and rag tag. But it was a real station. They ran some of the PBS programming – they got it after the main PBS station, you know because they were second-class. But they were the presenting station to PBS the first time around. You need a PBS station to be able to present it to the PBS system. So you know it was like we were brothers and sisters at the time. So it wasn't too hard to make that happen. And then Channel 11, WTTW came in as a co-presenter. Well they have a lot more muscle than KBDI. By then we were working with them a lot and I had actually been on the staff for several years before that. So, we started with those two stations that had a certain amount of credibility with MacArthur or with the funders because they were real they believed in it and Bill Kirby REALLY believed in it.

CF: What about WTTW, were they strong supporters?

TW: Bill McCarter was a defender in lots of ways for all this stuff and he took some heat for it. From some of the staff and some of his board maybe and from people who said you shouldn't put this commie stuff on TV. You know it wasn't commie stuff but it was a lot closer to liberal radical progressive politics than almost anything that was on. And he didn't budge on it – he said, “you know it's important. It's one of the more important things we do and as long as I'm here I'm committed to doing it.”

CF: So he was still committed to that sensibility of community service, public...

TW: He liked the show too because he thought it was good TV, and different from anything that was on. Plus what happened there – surprisingly enough to everybody was that we started to get really good ratings. And they couldn't believe it.

CF: We haven't talked about technology yet. Can you talk about technologies since the Porta-Pak that changed the way you work?

TW: I think it changed every time something new came along. The time-base corrector as a separate unit made it possible to take this helical scan 1/2” tape

that we were working in and convert it. Much later the analog tape could be converted to digital tape, which is what we do now with the archive. But that's one piece that changed the possibilities. Cable TV and satellites changed the number of available outlets. The thing that changed the whole methodology though was the ability to edit videotape. And believe it or not that didn't happen until 1965. All the rest of it was either film shown on TV, or it was live studio with some sort of roll-ins, but it wasn't really edited – electronically edited. It wasn't possible. I don't know what changed it. So then they had this show called *Laugh-in*, which was a huge success – a network success at the time. It was the first time there were fast cuts – because they had the ability to do it. What happens is with technology is that mostly it works its way down. Occasionally, as with the Porta-Pak, it works its way up.

CF: What do you mean?

TW: Well the big companies and the corporate users and the broadcasters get first crack at the new stuff, that's invented by big companies with big R and D, big expenses and a big need for getting paid back. So they sell it first to the people with the most money who have the most need for it, which are the networks and the local stations and those kind of people. And then, let's take the first video Porta-Pak that came from Sony, you know people say 1968 but in fact nobody had them until 1970 or '71. It was something that was sold as a product for training purposes for corporate use. That's how their marketing was set up. But what happened is that freaks like us got a hold of it and we had a different use for it and it worked. I remember 1972 at the convention we had a little workspace in the back space where all the newspaper chains and TV were. It was on a table and all our stuff was there and it was a meeting place. And I remember Charles Kuralt came by and he freaked. Because we were doing something that they couldn't do. In other words this technology was better and more suited for their work than what they had with their millions of dollars. So at that point – that means that this technology came from the bottom – being us: the least expensive, and the least capitalized, and the least corporate and the rest of it – up. So within a year and a half, CBS was working with mini-cams on the news. It went from a \$1,200 or \$1,500 dollar unit up to the mini-cam, which at the time was \$30,000-\$40,000 a pop. Granted it was color and it was fabulous and it had \$5,000 dollar lenses and all the rest of it but the technology itself – once they got that – they were able to do news differently and they did. Other technologies – video editing and TV, electronic editing for our kind of video became important when that happened.

Cable and Satellite allowed for more channels and therefore the hope for diverse programming and in fact it was very disappointing, because it was just more of the same, with the same owners and the same everything. You know, MTV started in the early 80s and it was definitely something different on cable and it defined a new paradigm of sorts for commercial TV but it was commercial

– it was selling records and songs and it was selling products and so it wasn't really coming from a place of saying "We're going to make the world a better place by using media", it was "We're going to sell more stuff and do cool things that people like so that we get ratings and more advertising."

CF: It also sounds a little like what you mean by the top down. Instead of technology innovating from the top down, it was programming innovating in the interest of making money.

TW: Right but I was also talking about technology which you know came from the top down in that first, there was science and research and then there was government. Big science, big government and all of that preceded what we have now, all the way to the big corporate .com businesses. All of that is huge money, which now in 2006 and onwards filters to the little guys because we have the opportunity, based on this technology. You can see what's just happening now with Internet streaming video and the capability of having Internet channels – which is going to be a monster wonderful thing that's going to happen.

CF: One might argue that the Internet was really a free and open space and that's why people were so excited about it to begin with. And that it is increasingly owned and co-opted by large corporations.

TW: I think you're right. I think you're right except for the fact that large government isn't much different from large corporations in that it takes multi-millions, billions of dollars of investment to make it work. It came from the Pentagon. And they had all the money in the world to make this stuff work. It always had the capability of being decentralized and interactive and having major possibilities for all sorts of people but it happened because they had enough money to develop it.

CF: In your papers I found references to a show called *Eye Contact*, which looked like it was conceived in response to the early days of home video – when that was first happening. Is that true? Did you do something in response to home video market?

TW: We did something in response to the home video market when it first started. The studios didn't know what to do and they were charging \$129, in 1977, for a movie and nobody bought them. They were afraid they were going to lose their market. There were still 6 or 8 movie studios at the time. And so we got together somehow and did a series called *Pop Video*. And maybe there were 6 or 8 hours and it was a test – literally a corporate test market – and got all sorts of surveys back and so on because it was a corporate model. It was their product and our content. And I'm not sure what came of that except that when vhs was a new technology (we're back to that) we jumped on it. We got a lot of help from Bell

and Howell video from a guy named Bob Fancook who really put up the money. He was in the duplicating business for the movie studios. They would make thousands and thousands of tapes and what he thought, very wisely, was that there was going to be a whole market outside of feature films in video.

When local cable was the new technology we jumped on that in like '76 to do a show, *The Five-Day Bicycle Race*, on the political convention in New York. There was no leased access, you know there was some community access programming, but nobody saw it. And when we did that it was the first program that was actually broadcast, cablecast in those days, on channel G and some other channel because they had just put it into use on the New York Telecom prompter (what was then Sterling Manhattan and later became Warner). So we jumped on that technology.

Well I'll tell you one thing that was really huge was the small format – Hi8 for instance. When Hi8 came out it was definitely cheap, there were 60 minutes on a tape, even 90, and it was the size of your palm. And it worked. The camera weighed about 3 or 4 pounds. And the first camcorders with the box weighed about 80 pounds or 60 pounds I mean it was formidable. That was the new breakthrough. That was the technological breakthrough and that's what made *The '90s* possible.

Each time there is a technology breakthrough there is a breakthrough for our kind of TV programming – which is expanding knowledge, social action, however you want to define it – and there is a use that we can find, that uses that technology in a new way. And that's been the thread all the way through.

CF: Porta-Paks started it all because their possibilities encouraged people to think they could make television. It was portable, you could shoot, edit, do everything independently. So it inspired new thinking and new art and new documentary ...

TW: You have to understand that in some ways the times were different. Things were very, very politicized. You know I just moved and I found piled of *Whole Earth* catalogs from the 70s and I remember we contributed to one that was about media. And the whole point was that it fit into a movement, it fit a purpose – the use fit into a political, social, cultural context at the time. Nothing like that has happened since then, until now, until the Internet. And now it's happening because it's a breakthrough and it's the biggest breakthrough I can remember, ever. Why? Because the costs are low, the accessibility is 100% there's nobody who can't get on – somehow. Granted there are lots of problems but technologically it's all there to do, and it never was before. You know every kid has a camera; people have it on their phone. So, there's wonderful opportunity right now to amalgamate content, program things in a different way, build communities around the content and belief structure and cultural assumptions and all of that. And come out with something that's global. And you know tv-tv in Denmark is more akin to us than Channel 9, here in Chicago. They're our people,

we're their people and now we can communicate easily and see each other's stuff.

CF: You were talking about how politicized things were when the Porta-Paks came out and do you really think they are now?

TW: No I do not think generally there is political awareness or consciousness in this country that's anything like it was in '67 through the early '70s, because it's been beaten down and corporatized. I think that obviously in France, obviously in Africa, obviously in many places in Asia, obviously in the Middle East, South America and Central America – they are in a constantly changing and politically aware state. Cultural change, political change, social necessity – saving people really – giving them the things they need to be able to survive whether it's water, vaccines – whatever it is – all of that is going on. That's highly political and important stuff. And this country is just kind of floating through, ideologically, I think. So no it's not like that here but it sure is around the world and that's where we're going. But in terms of video, using video and media for social change, and for just educating people about other people, and in terms of bringing people together who have common interest but didn't know it, this is the best tool ever invented.

CF: What about You Tube, Google Video and My Space – where you can just put anything there and it seems democratic in the way that there are few filters? It begs the question of what do people really want? When you look and see what the most played videos are and what the most requested videos are and they're not what's going on in Lebanon. So now that we're at this moment, of having a huge pool of every possible kind of video online nearly instantly, how do you build your audience, how do you really make free global access work for you when people don't necessarily want to watch your stuff?

TW: Or they don't know to watch even if they want to. I don't know – we'll have to see. Google video is amalgamating as much video content as they possibly can. And in less than 6 months, 7 months they've put together more video than anybody, already. And Google, we know they can sort things out. And that's the goal with Google video – to be able to find things in a video search engine of some sort. Their strategy is transparent. They say what they're doing and they spend a fortune to make it happen and have it and they're going to be the ones, if you ask me. Even with that, how do you know – what do you look for, if you're looking for Media Burn what do you say? Well if you know what Media Burn is I guess you can put that in and get it. If you're looking for independent non-fiction video – well who's going to be looking for that? Innovative TV? I don't know – I don't know the answer. But take *The '90s* for instance. We defined a community that didn't exist and they found out how to find us on public television stations. They didn't exist before, we got mail and faxes (there was no email yet) from all

over the country, sometimes from the least likely sources, and they found it. Well I think that's going to happen in some way with mediaburn.org – I know it's going to happen in some way with streaming and Internet TV channels.

I had an electrician come over the other day – he was wiring some stuff in my house. And he saw me and I was working on the computer on something and he asked me about independent programming and he said, "I watch Free Speech TV all the time and I watch Link TV all the time." This is just some guy and he said these are the only places that aren't lying to you that they aren't telling you the stuff that you know isn't completely right or true. Well, I mean he's an ordinary American working man – ok? He's not some guy who walks around wearing his politics. So he found what he was interested in and in the same way, other people will too.

There are still magazines that still serve the interest of various cultural and political and social interests. There are still books that come out that are not necessarily mainstream books that you find in the top ten at the airport but there's a lot of books and some of which have very significant input into the way people think and how the world changes. So that's almost a better model in a way than TV, maybe. And it doesn't take – it's a different model, it's a different dynamic. With commercial TV you have to have a certain threshold of viewers to really make your money. It's tougher and tougher because there's more commercial outlets and there's more competition with Internet and Tivo and, DVDs and god knows what. The broadcasters are based on ratings, on numbers. The Internet allows you to be based on interest group so that you don't have to have the numbers to survive. It's a lot more specialized it's a cheaper cost of entry. It can be supported, even ad supported by political, cultural or technological interests or whoever is interested in what the subject matter is – you can get the Google ads on the right side to match the subject matter and that's money that can come back to the content providers in some way. That's different – it's a different configuration. It'll happen somehow that way because there's an opportunity and the technology makes it possible, nobody's going to stop it. Broadcasters are going to squeeze anything they can just like they've squeezed the FCC and they've squeezed the government so they don't even have to report – there's no limit on the number of minutes of commercials in an hour – they've amalgamated it – so now there's 2 or 3 radio companies in the country. There's 5 media companies, or 4 now and 3 more in the world that are about the same size. I teach this course in television and society – and that's all the stuff we talk about. But the Internet provides a lot of hope, more hope in a way than anything I can remember because it's decentralized, because it's cheap, because it's worldwide. And because it doesn't take a threshold of participants in order to be viable.

CF: So given that – it seems possible that channel 500 can fulfill your previous ambitions to have programming widely distributed – can you talk about that a little bit? What is Channel 500?

TW: Channel 500 is an online TV channel that's interactive that builds its own community. It allows for viewer choice on some levels to be able to see things but it also has a continuum as a TV channel. You don't have to watch what's on the channel because you can go different ways and different places on line but it has an identity similar to a television channel. And in fact in the best dream of all would be to be able to do this online, take the best of it, edit it and put it on TV. And some television source would both promote and pay for the online channel. So what is it for – its to reach people all over the world with ideas – it's the same stuff as everything I've done – except it's much more possible now to reach people all over. And so it's way beyond America, we just happen to live here. And it's a way for people all over the world to get their points of view shown, it's a way for us to get the kind of non-CNN line seen around the world. It's a way to grow interest in non-traditional documentaries and films that have relatively narrow distribution. We got stuff from South America. We got stuff from people demonstrating in this country from years ago about issues that are now coming to the front again. We've got interviews with people who are now dead who had wonderful and important points of view about – anything. We can do obituaries, really, which I'm very interested in and always have been because you learn about somebody you don't even know I mean, they're great. There's also, we're also talking about something called 'face time' which is really just somebody talking to the camera telling their bit. We've been thinking about using kiosks where somebody can just walk up and say their business and it'll come directly to us somehow and we'll put them all over the place. It'll take some money and it's going to take some doing but at that point there is no filter.

CF: Like a Speaker's Corner on every corner?

TW: Right. Well they have one at CITY in Toronto and that was the first one. I saw it and I just flipped. You know it's like we had the idea and they did it. So there's going to be artists and feature artists and some kids stuff and – not necessarily like the Wiggles or something but street kids – like Street-Level Youth Media – produced by kids. Their point of view is just as valid and maybe more valid and more important to us than their parents' a lot of the time. So underneath all that is a concept and the concept is that if people find out about other people and other cultures and other histories and other points of view that that's going to lead to understanding. That's number one. Number two is that there are lots of people doing good work, helping the world be a better place whether it's medical research or Doctors Without Borders or whoever. And yet, we see very little of it really. And so if those people have cameras, which they do or could very easily, or if we helped find correspondents that could shoot what they do, we're showing something that is real that is believable that you wouldn't see otherwise and it's a model for what other people could do.

CF: Do you think media that works for social change and a commercial interest in it can work together?

TW: I don't know, it's possible. Where the hell are you going to get enough money except from people who have the money? And if you don't compromise the programming to match them – I don't know. Maybe after a period of time we would go down the drain because we [hypothetically] get money from GE. I don't think we want any money from GE and I don't think GE is going to give us any but Ben & Jerry's might. You know the Calvert social investment group might. Hewlett Packard might. Microsoft might, the Gates Foundation might. All these people have interest in some of these things, an interest to be represented in a wider way and distributed in a well-done, productive way. If they can be shown in a light that works they're going to want to put money into it. I don't know – who knows?

But you're right it is just an extension in large measure of the same work that I have been doing and people like me and my colleagues and friends have been doing for 35 years, at least. Really more. And it's a thread. It's a thread that applies to new technologies – it's still the same thing it's still this idealistic craziness of thinking the world can be better and that you can use media to make that happen. I don't know why I got picked to do that but [laughing] here I am again, still.

Documents from the Media Burn Archive

TV-TV press release Four More Years (page 27-28)

This is a press release announcing the broadcast of TVTV's *Four More Years* on Chicago Public television stations channels 11 and 20. It describes the content of the program as well as the spirit in which it was produced.

Media Burn production script (page 29-33)

The production script for Ant Farm's *Media Burn* event is one of thousands of documents in the Media Burn Independent Video Archive's collection that sheds light on seminal moments in Guerrilla Television.

Ant Farm Notes (page 34-35)

These are early notes that roughly outline Ant Farm's *Media Burn* event at the Cow Palace on July 4, 1975, and how it would be videotaped.

TV-TV-log for the Superbowl (page 36)

A log sheet from *TVTV Goes to the Superbowl* offers insight into the production process of TVTV's behind-the-scenes look at one of America's biggest sports events. This log was actually for a section of the tape that was never broadcast on TV.

5 days of LIVE broadcasting in NY (page 37-39)

These are 2 documents regarding *Five Day Bicycle Race*, a program about the 1976 Democratic Convention in New York City, attributed to *The Image Union* (the term coined here that later became the name of the tv-show Image Union). The last page is Tom Weinberg's handwritten list of who comprises *The Image Union*.

CNTV Rationale Channel 20 – Prime Time Chicago (page 40-45)

This is a proposal to activate Chicago's Channel 20 as a source of innovative and community-based programming, extended from the Center for New Television. The proposal is from 1981, during the time the station was inactive (1972 - 1983).

Channel 20 proposal – Weekend TV (page 46-48).

After Channel 20 launched as WYCC, the Center for New Television made another attempt to get its programming initiatives realized. This document is a proposal for *Weekend TV*.

Network Mission statement (page 49-50)

This Mission Statement outlines founding principles for a national network centered on the work of independent videomakers. The Organizational Principles discuss the *The '90s Network*, intended to broadcast *The '90s* as well as a broad array of independently produced programming.

NEWS FROM 11/20 WTTW & WXXW

5400 N. ST. LOUIS AVE., CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60625, 312/583-5000

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
SUSAN ARTHUR

UNIQUE CONVENTION SYNOPSIS
ON CHANNEL 11 THIS SATURDAY

A different and controversial approach to coverage of last year's Democratic and Republican conventions will be presented when FOUR MORE YEARS is seen on WTTW/Channel 11 on Saturday (February 17) at 7:30 PM.

During the conventions in Miami Beach, a coalition of youthful TV amateurs calling themselves TVTV (Top Value Television) roamed the city and convention hall bearing lightweight Sony portapaks.

Among the leading spirits of TVTV are Tom Weinberg and Anda Korsts of Chicago, Allan Rucker and Shamberg and Megon Williams of San Francisco.

They went into caucus rooms, receptions, candidates' headquarters and network anchor booths. Their aim was to create a video verite report on the conclaves, unadulterated by commentators' narratives of commercials.

The TVTV reporters employed 10 cameras and recorded on half-inch television tape. Their coverage was informal, unstaged and without anchormen.

The Republican Convention is covered from young people chanting "Four More Years" to a portion of President Nixon's acceptance speech. One sequence presents informal chats with Mr. and Mrs. Edward Cox (the former Patricia Nixon) Mrs. Julie Nixon Eisenhower, and a brief encounter with Henry Kissinger emerging from a private yacht party.

The Democratic Convention was followed by the TVTV crews from the California and Illinois delegations through the nomination of Senator

(more)

*Tom -
What kind of
a news release
is this?
Stue*

(add 1)

George McGovern.

Anti-war protesters in Flamingo Park are shown in action, as are network newsmen and newswomen, including Walter Cronkite, Cathy Mackin, Dan Rather and Douglas Kiker.

WTTW/Channel 11 is the non-commercial public television station serving a 75-mile radius from Chicago.

13173

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MEDIA BURN

July 4 1975

PRODUCTION SCRIPT

12:00 Noon Rehearsal run through for all involved
 * * * * *

1:00 PM Security guards report and are briefed by Michels.
 * * * *

1:30 PM In costume

2:00 PM MC to podium, roll tape of tv ads.
Kennedy, drivers, secret service to staging
 area A
Still photographers cover arriving spectators
Video crews last check of hardware, and set up
 for podium performance.

2:10 PM MC announces: 20 minutes until the Burn. There's
 time to visit the souvenir stand and pick up
 on the T-shirts, postcards, decals, and booklets, all
 the official Media Burn souvenirs. Now back to our
 regularly scheduled commercials.

2:20 PM MC announces: 10 minutes till the burn, and another
 souvenir hype.

2:30 PM OFFICIAL PROGRAM BEGINS
MC announces: "Good afternoon and welcome to Media
 Burn. Its nice to see so many expectant fans out
 here today. The Ant Farm has asked me to be your
 host today, I'm Bill Ding. (shuffles papers)
 The event that is about to take place may not be
 appropriate for young children. Media Burn is
 presented by Ant Farm and the views expressed here today

are solely those of the artists.

And now to start things rolling we're going to unveil the Phantom Dream car. (two guards step forward and roll back the cover)

Just six months ago this was a 1959 Cadillac Eldorado Biarritz convertible, now it sits before us transformed by over 1500 hours of hand crafted labor by the artists of Ant Farm. Inside the driving controls have been moved aft to make it into a two seater, thereby extending the hood line to 18 feet. An homage to Harley Earl. The two dummies will drive by closed circuit television. There's a camera mounted in the vertical tail fin and protected by a lexan shield. They view a monitor mounted between their bucket seats. They will be receiving a digital countdown on their tv screen as well as digital speedometer readings when they start rolling. To minimize danger Ant Farm has formed reinforced fiberglass canopies which fit where you now see clear ones. The right side door will function as an escape hatch. The car will hit the tv sets at approximately 55 miles per hour. The Phantom Dream Car will be for sale after Media Burn.

Lincoln starts toward podium

And now ladies and gentlemen, ^{I would like to} ~~we're going to~~ introduce an important guest who will be ~~hear from an important guest who is being driven~~ delivering the July 4 Independence day speech ~~up to the podium in that black limousine.....~~

.....here he comes (point).....I'm sure you will all recognize this distinguished speaker.....(Lincoln arrives, Kennedy walks toward the podium, secret service protect him).....Ladies and Gentlemen, the President of the United States, John F. Kennedy."

2:38 PM Kennedy steps to podium and delivers speech.

2:45 PM Kennedy leaves the podium, protected by secret service, he returns to staging area A.

MC announce: And now here come the artists...

...they're getting out of that blue van (points) and coming up here to ~~pose with the car,~~ ^{prepare for the Burn,"}

MC begins taperecorder with the National Anthem.

2: 48 PM National Anthem ends.

Dummies enter car, start engine, and pull forward 15 feet, slowly.

MC: " Now the artists will go through their final countdown, they are pulling forward to the staging area. This is a sound test, can you hear me inside the car? Check , Roger, Aok, etc. "

MC continues: " There are now 5 minutes until the crash. Cameramen should relocate down range.

Optic Nerve
shoots in side
door of car

The crew is installing the fiberglas shields. They won't be given the go until everyone is in position.

All spectators must observe the barriers for their own safety. Repeat, do not cross the white barriers."

Kennedy out of costume

Lincoln driver and fire crew prepare to track Cadillac

Video crew relocate to Burn positions.

Tom Weinberg checks with media & video crews
and gives final OK to the podium.

Podium gives final OK to the drivers.

They are now clear to go.

Drivers start Cadillac engine.

Fireman douses tv sets with kerosene, then
lights fire, and disappears.

Start, accelerate, crash !

3:05 PM

MEDIA BURN

MC: adlibs

Lincoln follows parallel to Cadillac. Look for
loose debris. Be prepared to extinguish flames.
Lincoln pulls up beside Cadillac. Drivers get
out and get into back seat of Lincoln, they drive
slowly back toward the podium, stop in front,
sign autographs. Lincoln then drives them to
staging area A. They change clothes while the
secret service protects them.

MC:(from sound truck, not podium) The Ant Farm
would like to thank the following people for their
help with Media Burn: Tom Weinberg, Electronic
Arts Intermix, The Cow Palace, Doug Hall and T.R.
Uthco, Craig Schiller & the California Video
Resource Project, Optic Nerve, Bert Aronwitz &
Marin Community Video, Tom Morey & Video Sales Inc,

of Houston,..... and Diane Hall, ^{*Joely Procter*} Sam Plimpton,
 Marie Ford, Phil Makanna, Dan Calderwood, Homer
 _____, _____, Ken Doll, and
 President John F Kennedy.

Thank you for coming and drive safely on the way
 home.

party: friends & crew at 2255 Lyon St, S.F.
 (corner of Pacific) 5 to 7 PM
 beer & wine

TN
Notes

INTERNAL DOCUMENTATION ASSIGNMENTS

The ingredients: 1 Fast-motion 16 mm camera; 1 B/W in-car mounted Sony porta-pak camera; 1 roving 35mm color slide camera; 2 roving color 35mm still cameras; 1 roving B/W still documentation camera; 1 time-lapse B/W Sony porta pak--3 hour duration; 3 crews with Sony 8400 color paks and DXC-1600 color cameras; audio cassette for podium; car; audio cassette for Burn site; 1 roving B/W pak.

The process: Time lapse sets up by 10 a.m.
All VIDEO crews set-up and shooting at 11:45
All still/slide photogs ready and shooting
for rehearsal photo oppty at 12:00.
Test tape with COLOR pak in vertical fin
q for the noon run-through (4 passes)
After rehearsal, tape-checks, etc., crews
lay out until 1:45 roving assignments.
At 2:15, crews move to EVENT ONE positions
When staging begins, crews go to EVENT TWO slots.

Documentation, cont'd.

1:45 ROVING ASSIGNMENTS

Elements: Spectators driving in; walking in; security guards' interaction; press entry and set-up; general milling, drinking, goofing; souvenir stand action; outrageous behavior of all sorts; capture the suspense, anticipation, scoffing, etc.; a clean shot of Burn area for before/after shot;

2:15 EVENT ONE ASSIGNMENTS

Video positions: Podium crew stays with direct audio (if better) and documents MC, special guest speaker from start to finish, including unveiling. Location head-on.

Reaction crew records ambience of the spectators through entire proceedings, including direct reactions to the audio people as timing permits. Location is at side of podium.

Longshot/cutaway crew records entire podium action from longshots for cutaways and perspective

2:50 EVENT TWO ASSIGNMENTS (as dummies enter car)

Reaction crew gets inside for artist intimacy.

Longshot crew assumes BURN AREA slot. (previously setup)

Podium crew goes to staging AREA for pan and burn doc.

Bert's crew stays in Black Limo for pickup and flow through crowd

— TL's mic goes direct to podium —

ORIGINAL

montage edit

REEL #

Bob

SHOT	TAKE	COUNTER	TIME	SND	CAM	ACTION	
23	100		sweep of stadium (visual)				000 - DID
228	186		Dee-fense, Dee-fense				
125	358		O say can ya see (SAND)				TV goes To THE SUPER BOWL
133	41A		hike ball - family on orange bowl				Jan. 19
	424		cheering for themselves				
15	373		tiny wing kids cheering				
	359		Tiny's hiking ball				
142	389		CBS game - UNITS/Stream				
142			Stream huddle				
21	357		CU hike				
21	357		CU ball snap - teenagers				
21	359		CU quarterback calling				
134	344		caps in stadium				
105	88		Harker being intercepted - orange bowl				000 -
			Mini-EDIT				
			— CBS — DUB —				
149	end of tape		camera man taking photo of Miss Miami				
			Miss Miami on top of CBS truck				
1/2 inch 19	535		Deal w/ Bob Wussler (L cut over Miss Miami)				
57	255		WVU radio show - Stenner, Grossman interview				
50	684		Wussler at production meeting - talks about "LISTS"				
			+25				

NEW YORK CITY
July, 1976

We plan to produce three hours of live television via Manhattan Cable and Teleprompter Manhattan for five straight nights, beginning Sunday, July 11. ~~The backdrop is the Fourth of July celebration and the Democratic National Convention --concentrating on ordinary people in the context of supposedly extraordinary events.~~

In this climate of remote huge political events, we want people to tell us what really matters to them about their lives, their future and their politics.

This is an experiment in realizing the potential of live television. By fusing the energy of live presence (in studio) with fresh tape and a call-in feedback system, we'll produce programs that highlight daily experience and interactions without prepackaging or filtering.

It will work because the people -- those behind and in front of the cameras -- will be honest and entertaining. The broadcasts will be co-ordinated by The Image Union (International Personhood of Image Workers), an umbrella group of alternative media professionals who have chosen not to identify themselves with existing bureaucratic structures. We are documentarians, video artist/technicians, journalists, architects, photographers, filmmakers and performers.

We have track records and recognition for responsible achievements in developing and delivering new forms. New York City, July, 1976 is a logical co-operative extension of work we've done before.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

Each hour will be 15-25 minutes in-studio and 35-45 minutes of videotape, both Color -- half-inch and cassette -- and Black-and-White. Tape segments will vary from two-minutes to full half-hours. Post-production editing will be minimal. Real-time tapes will be the norm.

~~Intros, segues and graphics will be used to fullest possible extent.~~

Studio-elements will include a television area for convention viewing, telephone set for two live responders. Journalists, tapemakers and "subjects" will participate in the live segments.

The tape portions will concentrate on what people have to say, rather than covering events. Categories of tapes are:

1. Ordinary New York people -- from caterers and cab drivers to construction workers and service people interact with Image Union people as commentary on getting through the day.
2. Convention-genre in hotels, bars and restaurants, focusing on environment and style of the Convention.
3. Conventional politicians and journalists whose universe is the Convention.
4. What Convention? People whose lives aren't affected at all by the hoopla of Democratic Convention.
5. Bicentennial minutiae. Kernels of truth with ordinary people who participate in the July Fourth weekend celebrations.
6. Political archive tape. Humorous and poignant tape materials produced by Image Union people ranging from 1972 conventions to political satire tapes.

MAGE UNION

These people have been reflecting New York this week

Are the Image Union the NYC this week

Andy Aaron, 212

Jane Aaron, 914

John Butler, 312

Nancy Cain, 914

Max Cohen, 212

Paul Dougherty, 914

Barry Friedman, 914

Chuck Kennedy, 914

Bill Marpet, 212

Jack Milton, 212

Joanna M. / Ton, 212

Elon Soltes, 212

Parry Tausdale, 914

John Trayna, 212

Tom Weinberg, 312

Eddie Beck, 202

Eleanor Bingham, 212

ESKIE BLUMBERG, 914

Phil Kantor, 914

John Keeler, 212

Jeff Hodges, 212

Susan?

Jeff?

Big THANKS to

Phil Sam

Adwar

Pat Weis

Lenny

Steve Lawrence

Leslie Leiman

Bob Mariano

Leanne Mello

ESKIE BLUMBERG, 914

NY Democratic Convention Media Coalition

Mr - Rat for VOTER

WE GOT OUR SUPPORT FROM:

Media Bus and

NY State Council on the Arts

Manhattan Cable

Electronic Arts InterMix, the Funk

we have. THANKS to Everyone.

students from

Goddard College

Community

and a Praying

Pat Weis

Lenny

Steve Lawrence

Leslie Leiman

Bob Mariano

Leanne Mello

ESKIE BLUMBERG, 914

NY Democratic Convention Media Coalition

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Family helped us represent get the idea it to you as

we have. THANKS to Everyone.



The Center for New Television

11 E. Hubbard
Chicago, Illinois
60611
(312) 565-1787

June, 1981

RATIONALE FOR CHANNEL 20

AND THE ELECTRONIC ROUND TABLE

Television isn't 35 years old, but it has severe hardening of the arteries.

Commercial stations were such successful revenue-producing machines for all of the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's that there was no imperative -- in fact, little incentive -- to foster excellence.

Pioneering work in quality television was more apparent in the 50's -- Omnibus, See It Now, Playhouse 90, Person to Person, Alfred Hitchcock, the Today Show, the Twilight Zone -- than in all of the 20 years that followed.

Public Television was a dream for "excellence" which has not been fully realized. It has failed to forge its own direction, groping for quasi-public support mechanisms in an era of government cutbacks and entrenched bureaucratic resistance.

But there is a tradition for electronic excellence.

Pioneers DO still exist.

That's what's at the core of the Center for New Television -- a strong belief that TV can be part of the solution; that the potential of the medium has been barely tapped; that excellence has never been corralled for a period of time in one place.

Critical to the cutting edge of TV is the requirement to produce for broadcast on an ongoing basis. It seems obvious: Writers write; broadcasters broadcast. To broadcast, one needs the FORCE of a daily broadcast schedule.

RATIONALE

Page 2

What is this "force" of TV?

Television, especially LIVE TV, compacts and generates great amounts of energy. It is compelling...to the participants and the viewers alike. When viewers participate, the "force" is readily apparent.

One example is the block-long lines at the Museum of Science and Industry when the "See Yourself On TV" alcove was set up in the 50's. Or, the drawing power of live on-air public television auctions to attract thousands of volunteer workers. People love to see themselves on TV.

Despite 24 years of The Price is Right, Americans still have their TV sets on for more than seven hours every day. Television performers are far more recognizable than local, national, or even world leaders.

The primary use of the "force" has been to sell products...more than four billion dollars annually in advertising revenues.

We know it's time to use the "force" as a vehicle for excellence. We think we have a plan for doing it.

As the New Yorker brought together print masters in the 30's
We will bring the electronic masters to the Center in the 80's.

We will nurture and foster their work.

We will create a TV equivalent of the Algonquin Round Table.

The work that is generated will be exposed first on Channel 20 in Chicago where experiments, some bits of genius, gems of creativity and a few overzealous mistakes will be broadcast.

Then it will be digested, amplified, honed, and, yes, packaged for national distribution via satellite, cable hook-ups, ad hoc networking and the like.

RATIONALE

Page 3

Those distribution mechanisms are falling into place daily. What isn't -- and never has -- fallen into place easily is innovative content ... new blood to run through the arteries.

To activate our plan, we need the "force" of Channel 20... a national model for new television and a focal point for the work of the most innovative TV people in the world. The Center for New Television is required to raise \$600,000 capital to activate Channel 20. The funds must be guaranteed by June 26, 1981.

Channel 20 will combine educational programming, packaged by the Chicago Metropolitan Higher Education Council and the innovative programming created by the Center for New Television.

Our component of programming for Channel 20 will include a large dose of extraordinary TV. We will attract the best talent in the country. We are already involved with many of the most creative. Channel 20 will be a bright light of talent, ingenuity and skills. And before long, a model for programs and viewer involvement that will have national significance.

Just as the Melvilles, Conrads and Twains of tomorrow are published in Harper's, so too, the Disneys, Murrows, and Hitchcocks of tomorrow will be broadcast on Channel 20 and its satellite extensions.

With the activation of Channel 20 and the establishment of the Electronic Round Table, Chicago, with the Center for New Television at its core, will become the head-end for the "force."

This can be the first mechanism for innovative television in the 80's.

Its impact will be felt throughout the global village.

The Center for New Television

11 E. Hubbard
Chicago, Illinois
6061
(312) 565-178

CHANNEL 20 BROADCAST PLANS AND BACKGROUND

When a revitalized Channel 20 goes on the air, Chicago viewers will have a television station which reflects the vitality, diversity and strengths of our city. The programming will be substantially different from the other nine broadcast outlets in Chicago, both in format and in the way it will be geared to its audience.

Channel 20 programming and operations will be the joint responsibility of the Center for New Television and the Chicago Metropolitan Higher Education Council. The Center for New Television is an organization dedicated to exploring television frontiers via independent television production. The Chicago Metropolitan Higher Education Council is a consortium of Chicago area colleges and universities, formed in 1977 to provide quality credit and non-credit instructional television programming.

Current plans call for Channel 20 to broadcast at 30Kw from a transmitter at the John Hancock Center. Its studios will be located as close to the center of Chicago as possible. Remote broadcast capabilities, both permanent and mobile, will be a major element in the facilities group and transmitting facilities will include a small studio in the Hancock Center.

The Center for New Telev

11 E. F
Chicago

(312) 50

WHAT'S ON 20?

In many ways Channel 20 will have the look and feel of the early days of broadcast television when experimentation with formats and content was the rule rather than the exception. Channel 20 will provide viewers with a dynamic schedule of programs simply not seen on Chicago television. It will be a place to tune in to Chicago, not a way to escape it.

At the beginning, Channel 20 will bring Chicago viewers services that are ordinarily available on cable in other cities. Since cable's impact in not expected to be fully felt in Chicago until the mid-1980's, Channel 20 can provide unique service by broadcasting locally-originated programming. A cooperative agreement between the Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network (CSPAN) is being negotiated to bring doses of Congressional television to Chicago. Other special programming will be available via satellite and distilled for broadcast on Channel 20.

PRIME TIME CHICAGO

The highlight of the programming day will be Prime Time Chicago, a three hour live broadcast at least five nights a week.

Prime Time Chicago will incorporate a number of program elements within a flexible time schedule. It will be news, public affairs, local color, cityscape, actionline and the best of Chicago and our people. Remote crews will be assigned each day to activities and events in Chicago. Sometimes they will station themselves at night spots, amateur sporting events, public events or shopping districts in Chicago. Sometimes they will cover newsworthy happenings and be reassigned to a fast-breaking event as it occurs.

An essential element of Prime Time Chicago and all the programming produced by the Center will be the results of the Electronic Round Table. The best and most innovative professionals will be delivering daily segments and ongoing series to Channel 20's viewers. The result will be programs and forms never attempted by, much less seen, on other stations.

Pre-recorded material that is relevant to Chicago people will be shown on Prime Time Chicago. Documentaries about Chicago individuals and institutions, interviews with pace setters in the arts, politics or community life and short entertainment pieces will be featured. It will be the only prime time program in Chicago to address public affairs every night..

WHAT'S ON 20?

Page 2

Live material will be used extensively on Prime Time Chicago. The studio will be a meeting ground for debates and discussions, perhaps for local jazz, rock, blues and country music, for performing arts groups or all kinds and for "how to do it" demonstrations, and for public officials and the people of Chicago to get together.

At least one live camera will always be set up and available at a publicized location in the heart of Chicago and, on schedule, might rove Chicago's neighborhoods. People with things to say, show or do for other Chicago people, will be sought out for Prime Time Chicago.

The content, pace and feel of Prime Time Chicago will be alive and changing every day. The producer will make quick decisions among the options always available each day. For instance, music in the studio may be cut with live "man on the street" happenings or segments from O'Hare or from a neighborhood festival, followed by a pre-recorded debate on insurance redlining.

The goal is to make Prime Time Chicago reflect as well as any television program ever has, the city it draws from and reveals. Prime Time Chicago probably won't match the ratings of Dallas but it will be far closer to the lives of Chicagoans, providing a service that is unmatched and showcasing Channel 20 as a place to turn to on the dial, even if it is just for a few minutes each evening.

The Center for New Television

11 E. Hubbard, Chicago, Illinois 60611 312/565-1787

February 19, 1985

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Executive Director

Ms. Elynn Chaplik
General Manager
WYCC - Channel 20
Chicago Citywide College
30 East Lake Street
Chicago, Illinois 60601

Dear Elynn:

Tom Weinberg, Paul Hirsch and I were encouraged by your receptiveness to our proposed project. I hope we can develop it as rapidly as possible, thus I am writing, as you requested, to describe our proposal a little more fully.

As we discussed, the Center for New Television (CNTV) wants to join with Channel 20 in an innovative new community programming venture.

CNTV proposes to program a significant block of time, perhaps beginning with three to six hours of weekend evening time, in in order to establish the "broadcasting presence" in line with our plans for expanding the audience for Channel 20.

The project on which we are working might be called "Chicago Weekend Television" and would include a wide range of programming largely produced in the Chicago area. (A draft description of the potential programming is attached.)

Our programming guidelines would reflect professional television standards. We would strive to make certain that the programs were intelligent, educational, cultural, interesting and entertaining: a goal that we believe we have the professional resources to attain.

Naturally, we recognize that the final responsibility for WYCC programs rests with the Channel 20 management so it would be important for us to work out clear guidelines with you before we begin.

Since CNTV would be directly involved in producing, be responsible for the programming and would obtain the required production funding, it seems clear to us that our initial programming agreement be on the order of 26 weeks.

The Center for New Television

CNTV is uniquely suited to joining with you for we have been perhaps the primary non-profit institution fostering and producing community and artistic video programs in Chicago since 1977.

While there are certain ironies of history involved, we look at this as a project that would benefit Channel 20 as well as CNTV by reflecting a joint commitment to community service.

Obviously there are many details that must be worked out collaboratively. The spirit of this letter is that we embark on this exciting new project as expeditiously as possible. The timetable that we propose is that we work out the guidelines and administrative arrangements with you in the next month or so. Thus, CNTV could undertake the fundraising effort during the spring, with a goal of initiating the project on the air in the fall of 1985.

We're pleased by your warm reception and look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,



Joyce Bolinger
Executive Director

cc: P. Hirsch
T. Weinberg

The Center for New Television

DRAFT

Chicago Weekend Television:
A Project of the Center for New Television
Under Contract with WYCC, Channel 20

Programming Plans

Each episode of Chicago Weekend Television will have a look and feel of Community TV for Chicago.

It will not be a "program" as much as an island of programming. There will be on-location videotapes with personalities, neighborhood and cultural events, personal artistic expression, musical and athletic performances, as well as other local color.

The orientation will be to bring local people and events to the viewers in a way that commercial stations don't.

The programs will not ordinarily be in half-hour or hour blocks. Videotapes will be broadcast in varying lengths and packaged with graphics, voice-over, and on-camera transitions.

CNTV would be eager to incorporate some relevant non-Chicago programs (or segments of programs) which are available to WYCC via Westar and other sources. This material might well be a broadcast complement to the programs produced and co-ordinated locally by CNTV.

Mission Statement

We believe there is a pressing need for an alternative television network that reflects the culture, presence and viewpoints of people historically under-represented on national television.

We will present provocative, informative and entertaining programming that celebrates the art and imagination, the wit and wisdom of diverse cultures, and the dreams and ideals of the individual using a wide variety of formats and styles.

We are dedicated to creating a new kind of activist television that provides timely information that helps people identify the problems that exist in this country and the world and promotes creative solutions.

We will create a network that will provoke, inspire and galvanize viewers to become informed and active citizens in their communities.

Approved, June 19, 1990
Chicago, Illinois

Organizational Principles

- OK — 1. The Network will carry highly diverse programs yet create a single, identifiable program service for its viewers.
- See yellow — 2. The Network is committed to presenting and insuring through its organizational structures ^{active participation and} ~~direct responsiveness~~ to the needs of a regionally and culturally diverse ~~audience~~ ^{community} including peoples of color, women, working people, rural people ~~and people of color~~, children, the economically disadvantaged, ethnic and other minorities such as gay men and lesbians, the disabled and the elderly.
- OK — 3. The Network's programs will provide, inspire and galvanize viewers to become informed and active citizens in their communities.
- OK — 4. The Network will both reflect and encourage the world's increasing interdependence. It will carry diverse programs, representing a wide spectrum of viewpoints from international sources. The Network will collaborate with a variety of public interest groups, local and national unions, learned societies, universities and national associations as potential program suppliers and audience members.
5. The network will work with media centers to encourage the development of producers from unrepresented groups and new producers.
and ethnic minorities such as
- Handwritten notes:*
Peace Groups
Human Rights
?

Guerilla Television Lexicon

Ant Farm

A San Francisco-based collective of artists and architects working from 1968 to 1978. Ant Farm's activity was distinctly interdisciplinary—combining architecture, performance, media, happenings, sculpture, and graphic design. With works that functioned as art, social critique, and pop anthropology, Ant Farm tore into the cultural fabric of post-World War II, Vietnam-era America and became one of the first groups to address television's pervasive presence in everyday life. As graphic artists, Ant Farm contributed to numerous underground publications, including *Radical Software*, and designed Michael Shamberg's *Guerrilla Television* (1971). Ant Farm members included Chip Lord, Doug Michels, Hudson Marquez, and Curtis Schreier. The main videoworks of the Ant Farm are *Media Burn* (1975) and *The Eternal Frame* (1975).

[Source: Video Data Bank, Chicago [http://www.vdb.org/smackn.acgi\\$artistdetail?ANTFARM](http://www.vdb.org/smackn.acgi$artistdetail?ANTFARM)]

Chicago Edit Center/Center for New Television

The Center for New Television (CNTV) grew out of the Chicago Edit Center to become a hub of independent video production in Chicago. It was the focal point of Chicago's growing and vibrant independent videomaking community, providing production equipment and facilities, and administering grants.

Chicago Area Videomakers Coalition

A group of videomakers in Chicago formed the coalition in 1977. Judy Hoffman, Lily Ollinger, and Denise Zaccardi organized the first meeting in 1977. This group consisted of most of the active videomakers in Chicago, who met for monthly meetings incorporating screenings and production workshops.

[Source: "Alternative Television: A Short History of Early Video Activism in Chicago" by Sara Chapman http://www.smecc.org/alternative_television_-chicago.htm]

Howard Wise Gallery

Howard Wise was an innovative art dealer and a visionary supporter of video as an art form. His seminal embrace and fostering of video artists and projects contributed to contemporary art history. From 1960 to 1970, the Howard Wise Gallery on 57th Street in New York was a locus for kinetic art and multimedia works that explored the nexus of art and technology. The gallery featured several groundbreaking exhibitions, including *On the Move* (1964), *Lights in Orbit* (1967), and the landmark 1969 *TV as a Creative Medium*. The first exhibition dedicated to video (or television) in the United States, *TV as a Creative Medium* included

artists such as Nam June Paik, Charlotte Moorman, Frank Gillette, and Aldo Tambellini. In addition to defining an emerging artistic movement, this influential exhibition revealed the need for new paradigms to support artists working in video. In 1970 Wise closed the gallery to lay the groundwork for Electronic Arts Intermix, which he founded the following year to foster creative pursuits in the nascent video underground.

[Source: Electronic Arts Intermix]

Image Union

Image Union is the longest running showcase of independent film and video on television, now in its 29th year. Its weekly 1/2-hour broadcasts feature new and old work by independent film and videomakers, obscure and well known. Tom Weinberg created the show and produced it for 12 years.

PBS

The Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) is a non-profit public broadcasting television service with 354 member TV stations in the United States. While the term broadcast covers radio, PBS only covers TV; for radio the United States has National Public Radio, American Public Media, and Public Radio International.

PBS was founded in 1969 and commenced broadcasting on Monday 5 October 1970. It is a non-profit, private corporation, which is owned collectively by its member stations. However, its operations are largely funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a separate entity funded by the U.S. federal government.

[Source: Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PBS>]

Raindance Corporation

Founded in 1969 by Frank Gillette, Michael Shamberg, and Ira Schneider among others, Raindance was a self-described “countercultural think-tank” that embraced video as an alternative form of cultural communication. The name “Raindance” was a play on words for “cultural R & D” (research and development). Influenced by the communications theories of Marshall McLuhan and Buckminster Fuller, the collective produced a data bank of tapes and writings that explored the relation of cybernetics, media, and ecology. From 1970 to 1974, Raindance published the seminal video journal *Radical Software* (initially edited by Beryl Korot and Phyllis Gershuny), which provided a network of communications for the emerging alternative video movement, with a circulation of 5,000. In 1971, Shamberg wrote *Guerrilla Television*, a summary of the group's principles and a blueprint for the decentralization of television. The original Raindance collective dispersed in the mid-70s.

[Source: Wikipedia]

Sony Portapak

Consumer video cameras first became available to the public around 1968, with

the release of the ½" reel-to-reel Sony Portapak. Notwithstanding its relative affordability (approximately \$1500), the immense importance of the Portapak was due to specific technical qualities that differentiated it from both film and video-based television.

While video was most obviously a less expensive medium to work with than film (due to the cheapness of tape stock and the absence of developing costs), videomakers were more attracted to video for other qualities particular to the new technology. Of major importance was the fact that video could be played back immediately. A cameraperson or crew could record a tape and then play it back either in the viewfinder on the site, or for a larger audience through a television set. This meant that the people being taped could immediately see how they were being represented on the tape. Editing could be accomplished quickly if necessary through an in-camera edit, which involves recording, rewinding through unwanted footage, and starting taping again at a point that cuts well with the previous footage. Video reels were usually thirty minutes long, which allowed for longer takes. This meant that it was much more likely that the full length of an event could be recorded without needing to switch reels. Also important was the fact that the eyepiece did not have to be held to the camera operator's eye. This meant that he or she could maintain eye contact with the subject during an interview, only needing to glance in the viewfinder occasionally to check the framing of the shots. This substantially changed the character of interviews. The low cost of tapes and the ability to re-record onto them meant that a videomaker did not have to make decisions beforehand about whether an event would be worth documenting. For these reasons, video was extremely useful in shooting live, unpredictable events and documentaries.

[Source: *Alternative Television: A Short History of Early Video Activism in Chicago*, Sara Chapman, 2005]

The 90's

The 90's was an award-winning series broadcast from 1989-1994, and on 250 PBS stations at its peak. 52 one-hour weekly shows were produced. Rooted in the production style and tactics of TVTV, *The 90's* engaged some of TVTV's original members, along with hundreds of independent producers to create an unprecedented showcase of independent work from around the world.

TV Lab (at WNET)

WNET is one of New York's PBS stations. "The TV Lab was established in 1972 to explore television's uncharted territories; it quickly became a focal point for video artists and technicians interested in developing television's potential as an art form through the creation of highly personal works. As a first step, the Lab initiated a series of Artist-In-Residence programs to enable video artists, choreographers, painters and graphic artists to explore the uses of tools such as portable tape equipment, synthesizers, lasers and computers."

[Source: Experimental TV Center <http://www.experimental-tvcenter.org/history/groups/gtext.php?id=92>]

TVTV

TVTV (short for Top Value Television) was a pioneering video collective founded in 1972 by Allen Rucker, Michael Shamberg, Tom Weinberg, and Megan Williams. Over the years, more than thirty “guerrilla video” makers were participants in TVTV productions. They included members of the Ant Farm, Chip Lord and Doug Michels; Videofreex, Skip Blumberg, Nancy Cain, Chuck Kennedy, Parry Teasdale. They pioneered the use of independent video based on wanting to change society and have a good time inventing new and then-revolutionary media, ½” Sony Portapak video equipment, and later embracing the ¾” video format.

Within a concentrated period of four years, TVTV produced nearly 15 hours of innovative video, forging a style that, though often criticized, was hailed as the documentary’s new wave. Selecting sacred cows as sacrificial victims to their satire, TVTV tackled power-seekers in the world of politics (Four More Years, Gerald Ford’s America), religion (Lord of the Universe), sports (Superbowl), and entertainment (TVTV looks at the Oscars).

[Source: Deidre Boyle: Subject to Change, 1995 & Wikipedia]

Videofreex

Videofreex, one of the first video collectives, was founded in 1969 by David Cort, Curtis Ratcliff and Parry Teasdale, after David and Parry met each other, video cameras in hand, at the Woodstock Music Festival. Working out of a loft in lower Manhattan, the group’s first major project was producing a live and tape TV presentation for the CBS network, “The Now Show,” for which they traveled the country, interviewing countercultural figures such as Abbie Hoffman and Black Panther leader Fred Hampton.

The group soon grew to ten full-time members – including Chuck Kennedy, Nancy Cain, Skip Blumberg, Davidson Gigliotti, Carol Vontobel, Bart Friedman and Ann Woodward – and produced tapes, installations and multimedia events. The Videofreex trained hundreds of makers in this brand new medium through the group’s Media Bus project.

In 1971 the Freex moved to a 17-room, former boarding house called Maple Tree Farm in Lanesville, NY, operating one of the earliest media centers. Their innovative programming ranged from artists’ tapes and performances to behind-the-scenes coverage of national politics and alternate culture. They also covered their Catskill Mountain hamlet, and in early 1972 they launched the first pirate TV station, Lanesville TV. An exuberant experiment with two-way, interactive broadcasting, it used live phone-ins and stretched cameras to the highway, transmitting whatever the active minds of the Freex coupled with their early video gear could share with their rural viewers.

During the decade that the Freex were together, this pioneer video group amassed an archive of 1,500+ raw tapes and edits. Reduced funding in the late 1970s forced the collective to disperse.

[Source: Video Data Bank, Chicago <http://www.vdb.org/VIDEOFREEX.html> and Wikipedia]

Videopolis

Videopolis was a community video access project founded by journalist Anda Korsts. It was one of Chicago's first video collectives.

The main focus of Videopolis was improving the community through access to equipment. The group tried to acquire as much equipment as possible, make it available to the public, and teach people how to use it. In addition, the group made their own tapes and documented the activities of community groups, labor unions, theater groups, and artists. In late 1972, the group's focus for the coming year was declared to be "experimentation with five uses of tape: education, community organization, arts documentation, historical documentation, and archiving."

An important area of Videopolis' activities was supporting women in video and film. The group would collect pieces by women from all over the country and submit them to festivals for a program titled *Women Doing Video*. This program eventually gained some corporate sponsorship and was then called the *Women's Video Festival*. Much of the work dealt with issues related to women's rights, such as tapes about women who had gotten illegal abortions, a national lesbian conference, the making of a centerfold, the Miss California pageant, chronicling a childbirth, etc

Another project of Videopolis, funded by the Illinois Arts Council, was to document a school of artists called the *Chicago Imagists*. While this type of project would historically have involved inviting the artists to a television studio to shoot and interview them, portable video technology allowed the videomakers to shoot in the artists' studios instead. While this type of technique has become standard in even the driest PBS-style documentaries, it was a major breakthrough at the time.

[Source: "Alternative Television: A Short History of Early Video Activism in Chicago" by Sara Chapman http://www.smecc.org/alternative_television_-chicago.htm]

WTTW/Channel 11

WTTW Channel 11, Chicago's first educational television station, began broadcasting in 1955. A group of civic-minded leaders formed the Chicago Educational Television Association (CETA) to lobby for, create, and fund Chicago's educational station. It became a PBS station in 1970. WTTW is one of 3 PBS stations serving the Chicago area.

[Sources: WTTW: <http://www.wttw.com/main.taf?p=7.2> and Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WTTW>]

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