

The Television Laboratory at WNET | 13 news

Winter, 1977

SPECIAL EDITION WINTER '77

LILY TOMLIN FEATURED IN WGBH NEW TV WORKSHOP/ LAB PROJECT



An original script by Peabody Award-winner Jane Wagner incorporates the works of noted video artists into a new dramatic format. *Page 7*

Over the past several months, the Television Laboratory has had a particularly active and exciting period. In order to share this with our readers, we have expanded our regular Vision News format into this special edition. Vision News this month becomes almost a scrapbook of clippings, reprints and reviews of one of our most productive periods to date. And looking ahead to what we hope will be an even brighter future, we've included, as usual, a look at some of our upcoming projects.— ed.

TWYLA THARP CREATES NEW DANCE WORK WITH LAB



The innovative American choreographer explores the television medium and new approaches to dance on television. *Page 7*

3 LAB DOCUMENTARIES GAIN WIDE PUBLIC AND CRITICAL ACCLAIM



'Chinatown,' 'Giving Birth,' and 'The Police Tapes' were produced at the Lab by several of the country's most outstanding independent video documentarians. *Page 2*



New Lab Documentaries Get Huge Response

Three innovative and diverse documentary programs produced at the Television Laboratory have generated tremendous viewer response. *Chinatown*, *Giving Birth: Four Portraits*, and *The Police Tapes*, all aired within the space of one month, were produced at the Lab by three of the country's most outstanding independent documentary producers.

Chinatown, the latest product of New York's Downtown Community Television Center aired December 3rd over the PBS network, gaining high ratings and national critical acclaim. (See Reviews). *Chinatown* was the second DCTV/Lab co-production to be aired by PBS. The first, *Cuba: The People*, was named by the New York Times as one of 1974's best television programs.

The hour-long *Chinatown*, shot with 3/4-inch color videotape equipment, was essentially a program about the American immigrant experience, touching on all aspects of life in that small Chinatown community located in the heart of New York's melting pot. *Chinatown* was a recent recipient of the prestigious Christopher Award for outstanding television documentary.

Giving Birth, which aired nationally over PBS on December 17th, drew nearly double the average audience for a prime-time public television program. Produced at the Lab by Global Village's Julie Gustafson and John Reilly, the 60-minute half-inch and 3/4-inch color and black-and-white videotape program followed the experiences of four separate couples choosing four different methods of giving birth. (See Reviews). Viewer response to the program in the form of letters and requests has been enormous. The program will be repeated by WNET/13 on February 23 at 10 PM.

The Police Tapes, which aired in New York on January 3rd, was produced at the Lab by Alan Raymond and Susan Raymond, the husband-and-wife team perhaps best known for their work on the *An American Family* series. The 90-minute black-and-white videotape program documents in detail, life-on-the-job for the New York

Continued on page 6

TV VIEW

JOHN J. O'CONNOR

Documentary on Police Strips Away Any Glamour

Sitting in the front seat of his patrol car, the policeman muses about reporters and television crews who regularly rush through his precinct in search of a feature story that can be labeled "a day in the life of a cop." He sums up the usual end result with an obscenity. This particular policeman is part of a documentary that can be seen tomorrow on Channel 13 at 10 P.M. "The Police Tapes" was made over three months—in April, May and June 1976—in a 1.2-square-mile area of the South Bronx that has the highest crime rate in New York City. The 90-minute program, edited from about 40 hours of videotape, provides a valuable perspective on the state of both video technology and television journalism. The makers of "The Police Tapes" are Alan and Susan Raymond, filmmakers who, as they put it, "recently have gravitated toward video for a further extension of our special approach to cinéma vérité." The Raymonds are perhaps best known for their filming of public television's "An American Family." Their newest project turned out to be "the most difficult documentary we have made." Among the reasons they cite: mastering a special light-sensitive camera; gaining the trust of the policemen, a "highly guarded group of distrustful men"; and the "emotional effect it had on us after being exposed to the raw or darker side of human nature."

The technical aspects were important. A special Nuicon tube in the video camera and deck, recording on half-inch "portapak" tape equipment, allowed the Raymonds to shoot practically in total darkness, frequently with streetlights as the only light source. They explain the significance: "People in the ghetto have two reactions to the sight of a camera—either to hide their identity or run towards you hoping to be on TV. Without the need for sun or lights, we were able to further minimize our presence."

The project represents an attempt to examine a police precinct and its officers, to "see what it's like to be a policeman." The viewer is given a tour of the South Bronx through the policeman's eyes and attitudes. Prefaced with a warning about "language and subject matter of an adult nature," the result is a startlingly graphic and convincing survey of urban crime, violence, brutality and cynical despair. It is by turns shocking, infuriating, disgusting and, surprisingly enough, absurdly funny. Near the beginning, one veteran cop observes that "there are certain men that can just take a certain amount of this . . . they should bring you to a shrink every five years for a drying out." His thesis is fully supported by the ensuing evidence:

A young Hispanic gang member talks about revenge on another gang for "carving an S in my boy's back." A woman complains about threats from her next-door neighbor, who is wielding a flatiron wrapped in a stocking. The dead body of a customer is found at a social club. An apartment door

is battered down to rescue a mother being held captive by her mentally disturbed son. A young suspect sits quietly in a cell as a policeman reads the pathetic details of the rape he is charged with committing. A car thief, caught in the act, becomes so hysterical that six cops are needed to hold him down at the station house. A 70-year-old woman is accused of hitting her daughter in the face with an ax because "she's always bothering me." A young woman, protecting her husband, heaps obscene insults on an equally young male neighbor. And another young man is picked up dead from a garbage-strewn street, the victim of a family feud that got out of hand.

If the mere compilation is staggering, the details are immensely complex and defy easy solutions. The policemen are humorously gentle with the belligerent neighbor. They only want her to stop making threats. Promise, asks one cop. No, says she. "Make it a maybe," says the other cop. No. "An almost maybe?" No. The 70-year-old mother, treated with tender care by the booking officer, is discovered to have a long record of assaults and is no stranger to the city's jails. The husband of the protective wife rushes into her arms for a reunion drenched in romantic ardor, and is then arrested himself. When the police discover a pack of marijuana joints in his pocket, he quickly and automatically protests that "that's not mines." The Raymonds do not themselves dabble in specious analyses, but they do include the comments of one of the Police Department's most articulate spokesmen. At the time of recording, Anthony Bouza was the Bronx Borough Commander, and he is typically candid with his interviewers.

He describes the average policeman as an idealist who is inevitably shocked and hardened by constant exposure to urban crime. People are being conditioned to fail, to become alcoholics. "I'm conditionable and they're conditionable," Bouza says. He argues that society has failed the poor, noting that there hasn't been a real redistribution of income in over 30 years. As for alcohol, he observes bitterly, "thank God it's available" because it makes the job of policing easier. "Maybe I'd be better off failing," he says. "We are manufacturing criminals out there, we are manufacturing brutality out there." Bouza finally compares himself to the commander of an occupation force.

The form of the "The Police Tapes" is obviously indebted to the narrationless "institutional essays" of Frederick Wiseman. The Raymonds, however, are not quite as impersonal as Wiseman in their techniques. They allow themselves to be defined as off-camera presences in several scenes. But they make the mistake of opening their documentary with a collage of "teasers" plucked from later material. That cheap device should be left to mindless entertainments.

The Raymonds, nonetheless, have gone far beyond the standard superficial routine of "a day in the life of a cop." With time, care and appropriate equipment, they have distilled one key aspect of criminals and victims and the people in between: the police, who "have a difficult and dangerous job and we were there long enough to realize the emotional toll it takes." "The Police Tapes" is the kind of program that Joseph Wambaugh, executive story consultant for "Police Story," has frequently argued for as opposed to the entertainment manipulations of most action-adventures on television. In addition the cost of the project is significant. With money from the New York State Council on the Arts and WNET/13, the total budget was \$20,000. A similar project in film would cost \$90,000, or \$1,000 a minute. For independent documentarians, always facing funding hurdles, the lower costs could be crucial in increasing production opportunities. "The Police Tapes" was produced by the experimental Television Laboratory, of which David Loxton is executive producer.

The New York Times

TELEVISION/A look at crime that Kojak never sees

Reviewed by John Cashman

Television police dramas, however violently active they may be, have an antiseptic quality that goes beyond nonbleeding bodies and bone-breaking assaults that are patched up with Band-Aids. The fabric of each of the shows seems to have been laundered for public display.

The result is a kind of fairy-tale perceptual distortion that robs these tube fictions of any reality whatsoever. Crime has a context. It does not occur in a social vacuum. And tonight on Ch. 13 there is a 90-minute documentary that graphically and cogently examines this interdependence between the social fabric and the crime it envelops and nourishes.

First shown two weeks ago and overlooked by many viewers in the wake of the holidays, "The Police Tapes" (10-11:30 PM) should be seen by anyone vaguely interested in being moderately informed about the nature and context of crime. Law and order in the abstract or molded to dramatic form is neat and tidy and simplistic. The reality is different. It's formless and messy and insanely complex.

"The Police Tapes" is about the reality. And it is a gut-churning, frightening, sad, funny and uncommonly candid precinct-level view of the day-to-day life and death at the 44th Precinct in the South Bronx. The footage was shot on fast (no movie lights), black-and-white videotape by Alan and Susan Raymond ("An American Family"), who spent three months in and around the precinct last spring with

their small, portable cameras. It is not a pleasant hour and a half, nor is it the stuff of heroic drama. But it's real.

The one possible quarrel with "The Police Tapes" is that the 44th Precinct is not representative. It's not. The 1.2 square miles covered by the 44th has the highest crime rate in New York City. Primarily it is street crime, ghetto crime—the crime of the poor, the trapped, the disenfranchised. Hardly typical, to be sure. But while Kojak and Columbo and all the other tube heroes tussle gallantly with middle-class, upper-class and organized crime, the 44th and other inner-city precincts register the bulk of the statistics that say the nation is manufacturing criminals with the same efficiency that it produces cars.

The point is that despite what you see on television and despite what you read in newspapers, the crime found in the 44th Precinct is more illustrative of what ails us than is the corporate banditry and intricately planned murders for profit, revenge or both that we watch and read about. The problem is that street crime, ghetto crime, doesn't have the clear, understandable lines of white-collar greed and psychopathology. By comparison, crime in the ghetto seems senseless and incomprehensible. It is not the stuff of superficial "entertainments."

Consequently, neatly packaged television crime shows glut the tube with ritualized ballets of good and evil that play to our need to be reassured that crime is followed by swift and righteous punishment.

There is a formal logic to it all that makes us feel secure.

In "The Police Tapes," the then-Bronx police commander, Assistant Chief Tony Bouza, who has since resigned to join the New York City Transit Police, has a logic of his own, and it is not designed to promote security. Wearing the two-star uniform of his rank, but sounding more like an articulate and knowledgeable social psychologist, Bouza says:

"America attacks the problems that it sees. It doesn't see these [ghetto] problems. They're now under the rug . . . To the degree that I succeed in keeping the ghetto cool, am I deflecting America's attention from discovering this cancer? And the longer it is deferred . . . the greater the moral problem when it is ultimately discovered. So, maybe, I would be better off failing . . . And that way, America would be confronting the problem . . ."

"The Police Tapes" does not confront the problem. It defines the problem. And in so doing it pulls back the rug for a while, and you know that we have festering criminality that can't be neatly cleaned up in an hour by Theo Kojak or anybody else. At the same time, you won't be sorry when it's over and the rug is back in place because you'll have a lot of questions and no answers. That is why fiction has it all over fact. Fiction always answers its own questions. You don't usually learn anything, but it's comforting. "The Police Tapes" was not meant to be comforting. That's its strength. //II

Newsday

A Fierce Documentary

By James Wolcott

Sirens and flames, a knife-slashed corpse, a psychotic criminal exploding in a *Marat/Slade* convulsion, screams, and the slamming of jailhouse doors: The opening moments of *The Police Tapes* (Channel 13: January 3) show a society suffering nervous breakdown. *The Police Tapes*—originally, and more accurately, titled *High Crime*—is a documentary videotaped by Alan and Susan Raymond in the 44th police precinct of the South Bronx in the summer of 1975, when it looked as if the entire crime-plagued sector would be reduced to blackened rubble. The last shot is of buildings gutted by arson rising from the ground like rotted teeth. In the South Bronx, *The Fire Next Time* has arrived with a vengeance.

During the documentary, Chief Tony Bouza remarks that one of the seamy pleasures of police work is that "you're in on every secret of society." The police here have the haggard, battle-worn, stonily compassionate faces of Vietnam veterans—of men who have seen it all. Riding with the police on their nightly rounds, the Raymonds vividly bring back the secrets that have robbed those faces of youthful animation, making it clear that every summer for these men is a season in hell. A young gang member is assaulted by a rival gang, an S carved on his back; a 69-year-old woman, leaning unsteadily upon a cane, is arrested for hitting her daughter squarely in the face with an ax ("Her face was split right down the middle," a cop notes); a family dispute ends in a stabbing death, and the assailant, his body decorated with a satan's-head tattoo, awaits his fate with the calm of someone killing time in a Greyhound bus terminal. Though there is violence in *The Police Tapes* as intense as a Scorsese rampage, what's really hammering away at these cops is the knowledge that nothing they do makes much difference. Joblessness, overcrowded courts, splintering families, the easy availability of drugs and weapons: It's a rot they can't hope to contain. And, as poverty extends its dominion, the poor of the South Bronx are driven to devour each other, like scorpions in a jar.

What was haunting the edges of Frederick Wiseman's *Welfare* is brought brilliantly centerstage here: Poverty literally drives these people crazy. A woman thrashes her neighbor's door with old tire irons; she greets the police by saying, "In my way, I'm all right," and when they leave, she cries out, "The marks on her door will be the marks on her body." Yet the scene which best captures the mind-crushing pressures on the poor is one without rage. Flanked by his mother and wife, a young man who is all bulk, hair, and sunglasses explains to the police that his family has no place to spend the night. They were burned out of their apartment on Bainbridge Avenue; their current apartment is unlivable, without either heat or hot water, and they can't move into a new room because the proprietor reneged on the deal. With moving patience, the penniless breadwinner ends his rosary of misfortunes by remarking, "I got to go to family court tomorrow to get my kids back."

At its best, *The Police Tapes* has a brutal, grimy phosphorescence. It reminds one, not only of Wiseman's *Welfare* and *Law and Order*, but of *Mean Streets* and *Los Olvidados* as well. Sometimes it's too jolting: In one scene (when the police are battering down a door), the presence of cameras clearly exacerbates an already crazed-with-tension confrontation. There are also moments when the Raymonds (whose most famous previous work was on *An American Family*) come perilously close to the stick-the-mike-into-the-victim's-wound technique of documentation. Those misgivings aside, *The Police Tapes* is a work of daring and intelligence.

But will it do any good? Near the end, Chief Bouza acknowledges the sorrowful irony that if he's good at his job, the blight may actually worsen—that by keeping things cool, he's deflecting attention from the ravenous needs of the South Bronx. I think the situation may even be more grievous than that. At one point, a policeman says that he's protecting society "from the animals out there," and that's what the Dirty Harrys and Starsky-and-Hutchses and Popeye Doyles stand for, too: The belief that without them, we'd all be cannibalizing each other. What's horrifying about *The Police Tapes* is that there is such blood-hungry hopelessness in the air that a lot of people will look at the blazing tenements and think to themselves, "Let it burn." □

The Village Voice

In '77 make a concerted effort to get out more in this helluva town. Prepare by watching the documentary, *The Police Tapes*, a 90-minute film dealing with the 44th precinct in the South Bronx. The worst crime area in the city. (WNET, 10 p.m.).

The Soho Weekly News

4 January 1977

Susan and Allan Raymond
927 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Dear Susan and Allan:

THE POLICE TAPES had me absolutely welded to the tube last night, in turn angry, frustrated, empathetic, but continuously fascinated -- both by form and content, which fortunately were well married.

In short, it was a magnificent job!

Discussion of the tapes spilled over into two of my classes at Brooklyn College this morning, evoking words of praise (and some awe) by students of television production. I've already called Carol Brandenburg to find out when the show is scheduled for rerun. I'll be looking forward to seeing it again, and calling attention to it by as many as will listen.

This is by way of saying thank you for what must have given you many moments of difficulty and doubt, but which has given us precisely what we need: a compelling look at the roots of crime and violence and a cry for social reform.

With best personal regards and good wishes for the New Year.

James Day

OPTIONS



"Police Tapes" filmmakers probed the violence of ghetto streets at night.

THE POLICE TAPES: This searing documentary views life and the crimes of the South Bronx, a 1.2-square-mile area with the highest crime rate in New York City. Filmmakers Alan and Susan Raymond (*An American Family*) shot on half-inch black-and-white videotape, with special light-sensitive cameras that allowed them to matter-of-factly probe the ghetto apartments and streets at night. From April to June of 1976, they shot this often overwhelmingly brutal portrait of violence visited on neighbors and families: crimes of robbery, arson, murder, and rape. Certainly this is the most revealing view of

the relationship between poverty and high crime rates ever presented on television—the filmmakers examining equally the points of view of police and "perpetrators." Outspoken Chief Tony Bouza (then Bronx borough commander) is especially cogent in describing the disenchantment of policemen as they go from aiding people to being cynically hardened "regulators of human behavior." "We are manufacturing criminals," he says, "and violence, because we don't want to face the burdens of responsibility of our conscience, and this is the national tragedy." "The Police Tapes," Channel 13



"The Police Tapes" goes "far beyond the superficial 'day in the life of a cop.'" □

The Village Voice

TV REVIEW

'Giving Birth' on Channel 28

BY LEE MARGULIES
Times Staff Writer

Wonder of wonders that childbirth is, the controversy that has erupted around it is incongruous, to say the least. At issue is what methods of delivery are best—in the hospital or at home, with medication or without, isolating the newborn or letting them remain with their mothers.

Both aspects—the beauty of those miraculous moments and the heated debate outside the delivery room—are smoothly integrated in a sensitive, intelligent program on KCET Channel 28 tonight called "Giving Birth." It airs from 9 to 10 p.m.

The videotape documentary is divided into four parts, each focused on a couple who has chosen a different delivery method than the others. Kay and Dave are doing a conventional hospital birth with local anesthesia; Eleanor and Mark are having their baby at home, utilizing Dr. Frederic Leboyer's "birth without violence" techniques; Lisa and Raymond learn the Lamaze method of natural childbirth but wind up with a Caesarian; Cookie and Alan are assisted by a midwife at a maternity center.

Each segment features footage of the mother's labor and delivery, interviews with the couple afterwards about how they think the delivery went, and interviews with experts about that particular type of delivery. The intercutting is splendid.

What emerges is a well-balanced series of portraits that are interesting, informative and intellectually stimulating. "Giving Birth," made by Julie Gustafson and John Reilly for WNET in New York, is forthright in its depiction of the births, particularly in the cases of Eleanor and Cookie. We see them pushing and straining, sweating and panting with the effort, and then suddenly a baby's head emerges. The body quickly follows and behold, a new human being is miraculously among us.

Forceps are used to pull Kay's son out, since she is under a local anesthetic and can't push it all the way, and Lisa is completely unconscious for her Caesarian, but those first moments of the newborn entering the world are marvelously captured in all four cases. It isn't difficult to share the parents' ecstasy.

And how much more moving it is than the live birth that was shown in ABC's recent television movie "Having Babies," in which the writer and producers crassly intruded on the moment by having the parents spout trite dialogue about the future of their marriage while lush music swelled in the background.

Pain Always Present

Among the people interviewed by the videotape makers are anthropologist Margaret Mead, Dr. Frederic Leboyer, Dr. Stanley James and Elizabeth Bing. All make their points calmly and reasonably.

James, chief of neonatology at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital in New York, where Kay and Dave go for their delivery, argues that medication has an important role to play in childbirth because pain is always present and if the mother is extremely apprehensive about it, the baby can be damaged. He also says there is too great a risk in delivery to warrant having a baby anywhere but in a hospital.

Leboyer, on the other hand, expresses disdain for the way American hospitals treat childbirth as a surgical operation. "Birth basically has got nothing to do with surgery," he says. "It's a very natural process."

Miss Mead contends that the use of drugs and advanced equipment in a hospital is sometimes called for but should only be used when absolutely necessary. A woman who can't experience the birth and isn't allowed to breast-feed her baby relatively soon may never establish the maternal ties that are essential for the child's well-being, she says.

Miss Bing, an advocate of prepared childbirth, says the routine use of drugs is dangerous because anything the mother ingests goes right to the baby. If women would learn how to cope with the fear and tension they associate with labor pain, through mental preparation and the trust of a midwife or loved one nearby, they could experience the pleasurable aspects of childbirth to the fullest, she says.

Dark, Warm, Quiet Room

Equally as intriguing as these discussions is the scene in which Mark and the doctor take the newborn baby and gently place him in a warm bath—a practice Leboyer advocates. As we watch the baby stop crying and relax in his liquid surroundings, Leboyer explains in a voiceover that he believes the child's trauma in birth stems from fear, not physical discomfort, and that by keeping the room dark, warm and quiet—unlike the standard hospital delivery room—and providing the bath immediately after birth, the baby is exposed to conditions that are closer to what he experienced in the womb and thus significantly less frightful.

"Giving Birth" is a solid piece of work. One could quibble about points of view it leaves out—the opposition to Leboyer's theory, the horror stories some mothers tell about hospital deliveries—but all the basics are here and that's plenty. Julie Gustafson and John Reilly have made a documentary that satisfies both the mind and the emotions.

As it happens, ABC presently is at work on another program that will feature a live birth. But this one-hour story is being developed as an Afterschool Special and is aimed at children.

"My Mom's Having a Baby," scheduled to air Feb. 16 at 4 p.m., will present an honest account of where babies come from, says producer Bob Chenault. In the story, a 9-year-old boy and two friends go to the family pediatrician, played by a real pediatrician, Dr. Lendon H. Smith, to learn what is happening to his mother.

Chenault says the program will be explicit and honest—using the words vagina, penis, uterus, intercourse—but not inoffensive or dull. The script was in development for two years and had input from educators and psychologists, he said.

"This kind of film has been needed for some time," the producer said. "It's going to be a good educational program."

TV WEEKEND

By JOHN J. O'CONNOR

CHRISTMAS is coming, and the network goose is fat on specials—a good many of them repeats from years past. On the counterprogramming front, ABC, the network for children of all ages, is letting Wonder Woman, in tomorrow night's episode, do battle with a gorilla devised by the Nazis to conquer the world. If the gorilla reminds some viewers of King Kong, who is being released in a new movie this week, that may or may not be a coincidence.

As for alternatives, one is called "Giving Birth: Four Portraits," and it can be seen tonight at 9 on Channel 13. This is a videotaped documentary produced by Global Village's husband and wife team of John Reilly and Julie Gustafson. Using the recorded experiences of four couples, the hour is dedicated to the producers' son, who was born last year, and it exudes the astonishment and initial elation characteristic of most new parents. Each couple illustrates a different birth process: the hospital setting, with partial anesthetic; a delivery at home with minimum paraphernalia, a Caesarian operation and a midwife delivery at a new kind of maternity center.

Each birth is presented in graphic closeup, and a preface advises that the program "contains language and subject matter of an adult nature." The producers maintain that this is "the first televised program" that honestly shows positive and negative aspects of "this life event." But births have already been shown in extensive detail on television, most notably on a late-night ABC special with David Hartman a couple of years ago. And the use of graphic detail remains questionable. Birth is indeed a life event, but so is death. In either case, for purposes of essential analysis and discussion, lingering closeups are not absolutely necessary.

But "Giving Birth" is most valuable in suggesting alternatives within the birth experience. Along with the portraits, the documentary offers helpful interviews with various experts. Dr. Frederic Leboyer, author of "Birth Without Violence," is interviewed in Paris, and he stresses the fact that "birth is not a surgical process." Margaret Mead adds her own touch of common sense: "It is sheer ideology to insist that you should always use drugs or you should never use drugs" during delivery.

The New York Times

Los Angeles Times

The viewing days wreathed with holly

By John Cashman

In case you didn't know, there are eight viewing days until Christmas. That means that television is on the last leg of its month-long reminder that Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without buying a lot of things you wouldn't ordinarily buy if it wasn't Christmas.

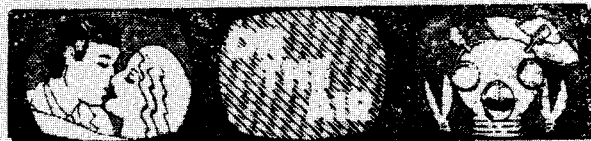
It is also a time when television goes heavily into the brotherhood of man, dewy-eyed remembrance of times past, plastic snow, performers and their families celebrating the holiday on tape in October and reruns of instant animated classics created last year—and football.

And it is a time when WNET, ever the antic gadfly of the medium, decides to run with a graphically obstetrical eye-view of four babies aborning. If you ever wanted a definition of counterprogramming, this is it.

TONIGHT

Meanwhile, over at the medium alternative, WNET, there is "Giving Birth: Four Portraits" (Ch. 13, 9-10 PM), a fascinating, if flat-out clinical, look at four expectant mothers and the earliest baby movies you will ever see. It is explicit, absolutely real and nonseasonal. Men should see it. Women should see it—if not tonight, then in rerun in a less festive season. It is not for the faint of heart or stomach. For such persons, the program could wipe out their sex lives.

Newsday



Jeff Weingrad

WALK ONS: PBS will air a documentary this Friday, December 17 (Channel 13, 9:00 p.m.), on the changing attitudes and methods of childbirth. *Giving Birth*, made by the husband-wife team of John Reilly and Julie Gustafson, focuses on four couples and the different method of childbirth used by each. These include a standard hospital delivery using all the latest technology, the Leboyer method, a Caesarian section, and a midwife assisted birth. The program will also include interviews with Dr. Leboyer and Margaret Mead. The documentary shows the entire childbirth process and will be preceded by an announcement to that effect. PG has come to Channel 13.

The Soho Weekly News

The New Yorker ran an article saying that watching television was a form of masturbation. The NY Knicks are playing the Boston Celtics. (Channel 9, 8p.m.) Channel 13 will air *Giving Birth: Four Portraits*, a video documentary on the changing methods and attitudes of childbirth. (9 p.m.) Certainly two different ways to jerk off.

The Soho Weekly News

TELEVISION

'Giving Birth': Graphic video documentary about four different childbearing experiences, ranging from traditional hospital delivery to natural childbirth. Interviews with Frederic Leboyer (*Birth Without Violence*) and Dr. Margaret Mead. (Channel 13, December 17, 9 p.m.) (NY) VVV

The Village Voice

12/20/76

Dear Julie and John,

"Giving Birth" was warm, sensitive, intelligent, and beautiful. A project worth doing and done very well.

Bob Thubert

Bob and I watched "Giving Birth" together tonight. We both laughed, waited, hoped and, maybe even cried a little. It was a lovely show - warm, caring and life affirming. Thanks for making it and doing it so well.

Nancy Thubert

University Hospitals of Cleveland

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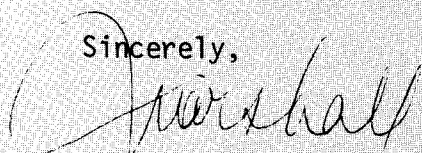
22 December 1976

Ms. Julie Gustafson
GLOBAL VILLAGE
454 Broome St.
New York City, New York 10012

Dear Ms. Gustafson:

Great film!!! Could we borrow a copy to study with our research group?

Sincerely,



Marshall H. Klaus, M.D.
Professor of Pediatrics

jmn

New Lab Documentaries Continued

City policeman. The Raymonds were able to record material usually inaccessible to other documentarians due to unusual cooperation granted by Assistant Police Chief Tony Bouza, and due also to their use of a new low-light videotape camera which enabled the Raymonds to tape unobtrusively and in dimly lit locations (See Reviews).

There has been much speculation recently as to the fate of the independent documentarian in the light of disappointing receptivity by network broadcasters. It is interesting to note that these three particular documentaries gained average, double the average, and almost four times the average prime-time public television audience, according to recent audience data furnished by WNET/13's Director of Research. With virtually no advance publicity, *The Police Tapes* alone scored nearly quadruple the public television prime-time average, placing it as the second highest-rated documentary in public television history. (The first was *The National Geographic Special, The Incredible Machine*.) It is interesting to note that the cost of these three documentaries ranged between \$20,000-\$30,000 each, an incredibly low figure as compared to three and four times the price of a comparable program shot on film.

The unusual response generated by these documentary programs may be reflective of what seems to be an awakening interest by public television audiences in non-fiction programming. The high number of viewers attracted by these documentaries perhaps reinforces the idea that innovative non-fiction programming can be as much a part of the overall public television programming picture as its more traditional cultural and performance programming. This information may, in fact, be key in public television's search for new and broader audiences.

TV WEEKEND

By JOHN J. O'CONNOR

THE MOST UNUSUAL programming this weekend is "Chinatown," which has nothing to do with the Roman Polanski film of the same name. Unlike the movie, however, this documentary is actually about Chinatown, in this case New York's well-known tourist attraction. The hour-long documentary, produced by the Downtown Community Television Center, which is based in Chinatown, will be followed on Channel 13 by a 30-minute panel discussion. Both presentations will be simultaneously broadcast in Cantonese on radio station WBAI-FM. It is estimated that the metropolitan area contains more than 100,000 Chinese residents who do not speak English.

The documentary offers a sympathetic portrait of Chinatown's inhabitants, many of them struggling immigrants, most poor and exploited by both "the system" and their fellow Chinese. For the tourist, they are anonymous or, as one visiting white woman puts it, "just like papier-mâché dolls." They supply cheap labor. Men work in restaurant kitchens 60 hours a week for less than \$100. The weekly salary of a waiter, who sometimes is charged for his meals at work, has been \$45 for the last 20 years.

For most adults, the drudgery is accepted while hope is placed in the education and advancement of the next generation.

Meanwhile, according to Jon Alpert, the video group's narrator, rents in Chinatown are among the highest in the United States, and many traditional businesses, such as laundries, are facing extinction. The Chinese upper class is portrayed as being "mainly concerned with preserving the status quo." Mr. Alpert and his group are obviously, but not stridently, on the side of needed reforms. They note a growing pride among Chinatown residents in Communist China. They mention new social agencies to help the elderly and indigent. They point to the activist phenomenon of rent strikes against slumlords. This, they announce at the beginning, "is the story of our neighbors." It is a fascinating story.

The New York Times

The Washington Star

Portfolio

• Amusements

SECTION C

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1976

TV TONIGHT

Italy's Politics, And Chinatown

By Bernie Harrison
Washington Star Staff Writer

There are two news specials of unusual interest tonight, the first on CBS, at 8, with Luigi Barzini guiding viewers through the maze of Italian political life, and for once, we can count on it at airtime, on channel 9, instead of dialing over to Baltimore, or trying to remember when WTOP might play it back on a delayed basis.

The station has another Caps' hockey game tonight, but elected to join it in progress (at 9), and viewers irked in the past by pre-emptions of regular prime-time programming for sports will be delighted to point out to the station what it can do when it really wants to.

The hockey game, of course, does pre-empt the CBS movie, which is no great loss — another police drama, "Report to the Commissioner." The choice movie of the night is over on channel 7 — the Barbra Streisand — Ryan O'Neal "What's Up, Doc?"

Here's a bet you can make with confidence. When current contracts expire, basketball and hockey will move over to an independent channel, which is where they belonged in the first place. As long as CBS was No. 1 (tied for first last year), WTOP could play tricks with the schedule. It's No. 3 this year, ABC is No. 1, and the latest Niensens show that the ABC's dominance is resulting in stronger ratings for TV-7's late news, a prime source of local income.

The previews on both news shows tonight are very good:

"Friends, Romans and Communists" (at 8, as noted). The focus is on the Communists in Italy and Barzini, a civilized, stimulating guide, points out the paradoxes of the opulent life-styles of many of the communist political operatives, as well as the support the movement gets from many creative artisans who cherish their freedoms. But kidnaping and crime of all kinds is higher than ever before, strikes cripple the economy, and Italian democracy teeters on the brink of anarchy.

"Chinatown" (WETA-26 at 9). If you were disappointed by the tangential connection of the movie, "Chinatown," to any Chinatown, here's what Roman Polanski missed. In this backstage rather than tourist view of the famous New York city ghetto, we see the reality of the lives the new immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan lead — from the heat of the kitchens, to the factory sweatshops that employ the women. The dream — a restaurant of their own (laundries are long gone), but the difficulty of learning English as well as the simple economics of their situation more often defeats them. A lamentable picture.

The Washington Star

Special

9:00 PM ■ CHINATOWN.
It's the most crowded neighborhood in New York City, with the oldest housing and the highest rate of tuberculosis. Tonight's documentary examines the quality of life in Chinatown, followed by a 30-minute panel discussion and both segments will be simulcast on WBAI-FM (99.5m) in Cantonese. (90 min.)



Newsday

Inside 'Chinatown'—A Startling Documentary

Last year, 20,000 Chinese immigrants arrived in New York from Taiwan and Hong Kong. Few spoke any English, but all knew one word: "Chinatown."

Tourism is the major industry, but beneath the veneer of paper dragons and fire-work-filled celebrations are a people struggling to make a living against the language and cultural barriers of the city around them. Poverty is everywhere. The dilapidated housing is the oldest in the city. The tuberculosis and diabetes rate is three times the national average.

"Chinatown," a 60-minute videotape documentary, is a revealing, often startling, look at New York's Chinese community. It will be shown locally Dec. 10, WETA-26, 9

p.m.

Produced by a group of young video documentarians living in Chinatown, they have gained access to areas and aspects rarely seen on television.

"Chinatown" examines many aspects of life in this community: the plight of illegal aliens; the elderly living in a strange land "fearful their children and grandchildren will never learn Chinese"; the Lee Family Association, which loans money at what Alpert describes as "exorbitant prices"; Chinese herb doctors; Chinese opera; changing Chinatown attitudes toward Communist China; even the New Jersey Chinese truck farmers who supply the exotic vegetables for Chinatown's stores and restaurants.

The Washington Star

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遊覽公司竟當賊
調停文件添麻煩



China Daily News

Lily Tomlin to Star in upcoming Lab Co-Production

Actress and comedienne Lily Tomlin will star in the forthcoming 90-minute PBS special tentatively titled *Collisions*, co-produced by David Loxton of the Television Laboratory and Fred Barzyk of WGBH in Boston.

Collisions is an original screenplay written by Peabody Award-winning writer Jane Wagner, and stars Gilda Radner and Danny Ackroyd of NBC's *Saturday Night Live*, Irwin Corey and Charles White.

The program, shot in the studios of WGBH and in Ms. Tomlin's hometown of Paducah, Kentucky, experiments with the standard dramatic narrative format by incorporating various short original pieces by video artists into the story line. Ron Hays, Ed Emshwiller, Peter Campus, William Wegman, Stan Vanderbeek and choreographer Louis Falco are among those artists who contributed works to the program.

In her original script, writer Wagner imagines that the Earth is on a collision course with an unseen planet, Zhyumus, which sends a representative to Earth, (Lily), in the guise of a television newscaster. Lily's job is to determine whether or not the Earth is worth saving from inevitable destruction. From her unique vantage point, Lily is able to give a visitor's-eye-view of the human condition on everything from birth and death to pop culture and politics.

Collisions is expected to air over PBS in the spring. Funds were provided primarily by the Rockefeller Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.



Network execs from another planet: Danny Ackroyd, Charles White, Gilda Radner, and Irwin Corey.

New Work by Twyla Tharp Nearing Completion

Twyla Tharp, who has been called the most important American choreographer at work today, was invited by the Lab to work within the television medium. As a result of that invitation, Ms. Tharp, in collaboration with director Don Mischer, has spent between four and five months during the past year both familiarizing herself with and utilizing television's complex visual vocabulary.

The result has been the creation of a series of dance sequences each specifically designed by her to explore particular dance/television formats: the high technology at the Lab's Studio 46, TV studio performance before a live audience at WNET/13's Studio 55, location shooting with WNET mini-cam crews, and hand-held verite-documentary shooting with black-and-white porta paks.

Many of these sequences were then reprocessed through WNET's complex post-production facility. From this emerged 20 minutes of original dance for television featuring Twyla Tharp herself and four leading dancers from her company — Shelley Washington, Tom Raw, Jennifer Way, and Christine Uchida.

In addition, the entire creative process was recorded on half-inch black-and-white tape by video

documentarian Joel Gold. Over 60 hours of material was obtained and this material, under the supervision of editor Aviva Slesin, is now being woven in and around the dance pieces. The result, a 60-minute program for national public television broadcast, is a fascinating look at the trials and tribulations of one of America's most innovative artists at work.

Emshwiller, Noyes, And Other Artists In Final Post Production.

The work of six to eight well-known video makers will become the basis for a new and innovative series produced by the Television Laboratory. Original works by Ed Emshwiller, Eli Noyes, Jr., Arthur Ginsberg, Skip Sweeney and others are nearing completion after nearly a year of research, development, and production.

Ed Emshwiller's *Sur Faces* will be the sixth major work produced by the video artist since he began his residency at the Lab in 1972. Using 8 actors, formerly members of the Open Theatre, Emshwiller has created a structural collage of man/woman relationships via scenes from several important plays, including Strindberg's *Miss Julie* and Shakespeare's *Richard III*. By

selecting plays from different periods in literary history and using a mix of videotape styles, Emshwiller investigates man/woman relationships as they have changed through time.

Award-winning filmmaker Eli Noyes, Jr. is completing his first videotaped works at the Lab. He has produced 2 modern day fairy tales, including *Glove Story* from his original script, and an adaptation of the Grimm's fairy tale *Fitcher's Feathered Bird*. These have been incorporated into three half-hours showcasing these and the existing body of Eli's work in film animation and live action.

Arthur Ginsberg is nearing completion of post-production of *Kaddish*, his videotape interpreta-

tion of poet Alan Ginsberg's autobiographical work. The stage version of *Kaddish* was produced last year by The Chelsea Theatre. Arthur Ginsberg's videotape interpretation is a blend of sound and image, and features Alan Ginsberg in a reading of his work.

San Francisco-based videomaker Skip Sweeney has completed *My Father Sells Studebakers*, a mix of fiction and non-fiction elements which form an exploration of the artist's often painful relationship with his father, now deceased. Sweeney composed the piece on locations in San Francisco and New York.

Major funding for the series was provided by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Jean Shepherd Writes First Teleplay for Lab/WGBH Venture

Jean Shepherd, famed author and radio personality, collaborated with the TV Lab and the New Television Workshop at WGBH in Boston on the production of his first teleplay, *Phantom of the Open Hearth*. The 90-minute program aired nationally over PBS on December 23rd as part of the PBS *Visions* series. *Phantom* was co-produced and directed by David Loxton and Fred Barzyk. Executive Producer for the *Visions* series is Barbara Schultz, at KCET in Los Angeles. (See Reviews).

Offbeat 'Visions' Nostalgia

By JOHN J. O'CONNOR

Jean Shepherd, the humorist, author and personality in the broadcasting corridors of radio and television, insists that he hates nostalgia. All right, for argument's sake, let's buy that. But his "The Phantom of the Open Hearth," which can be seen on public television's, "Visions" series tonight at 9 o'clock is a wonderfully offbeat reminiscence of a young man enduring the maturation trials of a junior prom in the industrial Middle West of the 1940's.

For Mr. Shepherd, nostalgia is a distortion of the past, making it look better than it really was. He believes "the best time is right now," that "the only difference between now and then is who is being miserable." On the other hand, the Shepherd vision of the American dream is rooted in "the beautiful future, the glorious past and the crummy now."

The details may be inconsistent, but the storytelling is irresistible. If the mention of nostalgia is frowned upon, perhaps the Shepherd style can be described as sentimental in the vein known as boozey. He is the masterful spinner of yarns in the local pub or saloon. The language is self-consciously overripe. The Middle West becomes that "great inverted bowl of darkness." People sit in movie theaters where "outside those doors crouched the pale gray wolf of reality."

The content is almost quaintly luscious, but the style of delivery is street-corner tough. Mr. Shepherd narrated his own play out of the corner of his mouth. He is the gentle Midwesterner performing for the urban toughs. The same technique and public persona is used by another Midwesterner named Studs Terkel.

The young man of Mr. Shepherd's story is Ralph (David Elliott), who dreams about taking the stupendous Daphne Bigelow (Tobi Filavin) to the prom. Ralph's father, the "old man" (James Broderick), goes bowling every Wednesday and has won a table lamp, in the shape of a woman's leg wearing a high-heeled shoe, in a sports-quiz contest. Dad was "a generation ahead of his time—the first genuine Pop Art fanatic." Ralph's mother is devoted to dish night at the local Orpheum, where a crisis is approaching as the customers have been given the same gravy boat four weeks in a row.

As produced and directed by Fred Barzyk and David Loxton, who are associated with experimental public television centers in Boston and New York, "The Phantom of the Open Hearth" takes its average American lunacies with the utmost seriousness. No matter the circumstances, the characters keep pushing along, convinced that all will eventually turn out for the best. Even the rented white tuxedo jacket with the gaping hole in the breast pocket looks quite acceptable when it is finally delivered.

We know that Ralph will never get the treasured attention of Daphne. She is reserved for some special guys. The others? "Well, they do the best they can." The best Ralph can do is Wanda Hickey (Roberta Wallach), who naps to be a whiz in algebra. But the prom has an inevitable life of its own. Mickey Easley and His Magic Music Makers play "Red Sails in the Sunset" and "Stardust." Wanda, wearing her orchid corsage, begins to sweat right through her taffeta dress. The pianist in the sophisticated cocktail lounge wears an ornate platinum wig. And Ralph gets drunk and terribly sick.

It's delightful and somewhat painful. As Mr. Shepherd reminds us: "Everybody in America has got a prom picture stuck away somewhere—and they'd never show it to anyone—and with good reason." Meanwhile, this one, laced with marvelous performances, is well worth watching.

The New York Times

Bridging the Gulf Between Indiana and Brooklyn

By MARTIN A. JACKSON

A humorist looks outward and sees the world," observed Jean Shepherd. "A comic looks inward and sees himself." It was a practiced reply, but then Shepherd is a practiced humorist, not a comic; he's been performing and writing in his highly individualistic way for two decades. Thursday night at 9, on Channel 13, viewers will see what is perhaps his most ambitious project to date, a full-length play entitled "Phantom of the Open Hearth" on the PBS "Visions" series.

"Comedy," Shepherd continued, "is a form which ends in laughter, but humor is a form in which laughter is a by-product. I do humor—I'm not Don Rickles. That's not a value judgment. I'm just making the distinction."

It's a distinction that viewers might want to consider when watching "Phantom of the Open Hearth." With a script derived from Shepherd's novel, "Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories and Other Disasters," the play concerns a high school prom, dating, adolescence and growing up in mid-America. "But it's like nothing you've ever seen before on TV," says Shepherd.

"The story is about prom night and the kid's date," he went on. "But it also follows the old man and the mother—you see how their lives interact but how they also lead very separate existences. The kid doesn't really know about his mother's life or her feelings, the same way the mother doesn't ever understand his experiences. You know, when your mother asks you 'what happened at school today?', you just say, 'nothing much, ma.' And all the time you're sitting in the back of the room breaking into a cold sweat over some girl—you can't tell your mother that. And she can't tell you about her day either. Well, in 'Phantom' we get to see how each of these people react and how they experience an event, like a prom. It's done in a very cinematic style—not at all like a standard three-act play. There's a lot of cutting back and forth from the parents to the kid, a lot of flashbacks."

Shepherd is careful to emphasize the contemporaneity of the play, despite its setting somewhere in the 1940's. "I'm anti-nostalgia," he said. "I think nostalgia is a sickness. It's symptomatic of a deep cleavage in American life. It's one of the only things Americans have left in common—the past. How else can a kid from Hammond, Indiana, and a kid from Brooklyn talk to each other? They have to talk about Bogart because they don't understand anything else about each other's lives." The play is part of Shepherd's continuing effort to bridge that gulf between Hammond and Brooklyn.

"All of my pieces are contemporary," Shepherd insisted. "I write about American ritual, which is largely unchanged, and I try to place my characters in a real milieu, one that we all live in." The prom described in "Phantom" could have been any time in the past 50 years, he said. "When we shot the prom scenes, we went up to a school near Boston and asked them to hold a prom for us—not an old fash-



Shepherd: "Nostalgia is a sickness."

ioned prom, just a normal one like they hold every year. Well, it was exactly right for the period of the play—nothing had to be changed. The tuxedos, the music, the decorations in the gym, everything was just right.

"I'm very careful not to write about things that are dead and gone. And Americans haven't changed much in the past 50 years. Kids still go to proms, fathers go bowling, mothers go shopping—maybe not in New York but in the rest of the country they sure as hell do. And I can tell you, New York City is not America."

Jean Shepherd has been living in New York City, however, since the late 1950's. He came out of the Midwest, a successful television performer in Cincinnati, hoping to replace Steve Allen on the "Tonight" show. He's been a semi-pro baseball player, a stand-up comic, a film writer, a contributor to magazines ranging from *Mademoiselle* to *Car and Driver* and, in his words, "a media performer." "Phantom of the Open Hearth" is his first full-length television play, but he's no stranger to the typewriter. His novels, "Wanda Hickey" and "In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash" remain steady sellers, particularly on the college scene, ten years after publication. His latest novel, "The Secret Mission of the Blue Assed Buzzard," about his Army career, is due in January.

Shepherd has also been an actor on the Broadway stage, done one-man shows at Carnegie Hall and been host of a television series, "Jean Shepherd's America," that one critic called "an antidote to Bicentennialitis." All this was in addition to his nightly radio broadcast on WOR. (Marshall McLuhan once characterized Shepherd's radio program as a "nightly novel.")

The novel Shepherd is putting together, in print and sound, is the story of the 20th-century American, a lofty goal for someone whose first job was in a steel mill. But he argues that it is precisely such a background that equips him to catch the spirit of America in these times. "This is an industrial country, man. Who writes about that life today? Nobody. Novels that get reviewed are about New York or Los Angeles, not about some kid from a steel town who buys a Red Ryder BB gun. That's not an official kind of

novel, that's nostalgia." He sneered at the last word. "Listen, once I had to call up *The Times*, when 'In God We Trust' was on the best-seller list, and ask them to move it from the non-fiction to the fiction column. They didn't believe that these were stories about fictional people. That stuff isn't about me."

Why, then, do so many readers (and listeners) assume that his stories are indeed about the young Shepherd at home in Indiana? "That's what's called style. The more style you have, the more people believe you're just talking—that you're not really writing. It's the same thing Mark Twain faced—no body believed he made up those stories. I rewrote 'In God We Trust' six times before I was satisfied with it."

Such rewriting produced two novels, episodic in nature, that try to pin down the sense of being American in the 20th century. They are about blind dates, vacations at The Lake (fifty billion mosquitoes on a surface of mud and chemical waste), meat loaf with tomato sauce, cleaning crappies on the back porch after an all-night fishing trip with the Old Man and his beer burping pals, and cars.

Most people who recognize Shepherd's name connect him with his show, a situation that never fails to disturb him. "I don't consider myself a radio personality," he said. But the radio show has been on WOR for 20 years and, like it or not, Shepherd is probably forever identified with it. These days, it isn't necessary to stay up all night to listen to the show, as his dedicated fans did in the mid-50's. Shepherd is now broadcast at a respectable 9:45 P.M.

Listen to almost any Shepherd radio show and one begins to understand what McLuhan meant about a "nightly novel." In one fairly representative 45-minute segment, Shepherd talked about the following topics: portable tape recorders, 1956 Pontiacs and their start-up problems (with sound effects), Rex Reed, fighter planes, Harp beer, James Joyce, famine, unions, P. G. Wodehouse, Groucho Marx, osmosis, evangelical zeal, New Jersey, and the pleasures of speaking French in Marseilles.

Shepherd doesn't work from a script but it would be incorrect to say that the show is ad-libbed. "I know precisely what I'm going to talk about each time," he said. "None of this is spur of the moment. In fact, I work pretty hard getting the show together—sure, I improvise and digress, but I know the main theme of each show beforehand." Those themes vary from night to night: Army stories, kid stories, serious social analysis, sport tales, literature, movies. It's a multimedia novel, something suitable for a media-drenched society, and Shepherd uses whatever form he has available. He is a tribal story-teller, trying to explain us to us. ■

The New York Times

Jean Shepherd Evokes the '30s

BY CECIL SMITH
Times Television Critic

One criticism that can justifiably be aimed at Visions—and at other enterprises introducing new writers—is that the plays are such downers. Young writers always seem to be viewing with alarm; their outlook is dour and grim and they've almost no sense of humor.

Visions tonight (Channel 28 at 9) comes up with a decided exception to this rule in "Phantom of the Open Hearth," a first TV play by the veteran humorist Jean Shepherd, adapted from his book "Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories and Other Disasters."

It's on film, codirected by Fred Barzyk and David Loxton, featuring Family's James Broderick heading an absolutely perfect cast of farceurs, most notably David Elliott as the young Jean Shepherd. The old Jean Shepherd plays himself rolling down a contemporary highway, remember-

'PHANTOM OF THE OPEN HEARTH'

Visions production of a play by Jean Shepherd. Executive producer Barbara Schultz. Produced and directed by Fred Barzyk and David Loxton. Photography Peter Hoving. Art director John Wright Stevens. Costumes Jennifer on Mayrhauser. Features James Broderick, David Elliott, Jean Shepherd, Barbara Bolton, Robert Wallach, Joey Faye, Tobi Pivavin, Brian Utman, William Lampley. Airs on Channel 28 tonight at 9, repeated Saturday night at 10.

ing the past in one of those midwestern steel towns where if you looked into the blast furnaces you sometimes saw the phantom of the hearth staring out at you in the fiery glow.

Specifically, he remembers his junior prom and his panting pursuit of the school beauty Daphne Bigelow (Tobi Pivavin) while being pursued by Wanda Hickey (Roberta Wallach), a girl whose glasses were as thick as the bottoms of Coke bottles and who was a shark at algebra. Not even the Alaskan salmon swimming upstream to mate, battling elements and bears and fishermen, has a more complex and endangered sex life than a high school junior, according to Shepherd.

Or had. This is a Valentine to the past—to America in the late 30s . . . when father (Broderick) won a contest from the Nehi soda pop company and his prize was a lamp in the shape of a woman's shapely leg (the Nehi trademark) which he proudly put in the front window for all to see and which his wife (Barbara Bolton) hated on sight. She was, in turn, an addict of Dish Night at the movies, even though the dishes always seemed to be gravy boats.

There's one priceless sequence when one of Pop's cronies, another steel-mill puddler, buys a do-it-yourself five-room Cape Cod house from Sears-Roebuck which arrives in two box cars, each part coded for construction, and a group of his beer-swigging friends help him unload it.

The film is a dilly, a doll, an absolute delight. Moreover, for nostalgia buffs, it precisely evokes the past, even to the over-age orchestra at the prom and its syrupy playing of "Star Dust."

Los Angeles Times

'Open Hearth': Kidhood Revisited

By Alan M. Kriegsman

Raconteur Jean Shepherd may not actually have invented nostalgia, but for many years on the radio—long before rehabing the past became a national obsession—he seemed to have a corner on the market.

Now public TV's "Visions" series has afforded him the wide berth of a 90-minute teleplay, and the outcome is an exceptionally amusing, evocative and insightful program. "The Phantom of the Open Hearth," about a boy's tribulations with his junior prom in a '40s steel town, airs tonight

TV Preview

at 9 o'clock on Channels 26 and 22. It's quintessential Shepherd, captured in a format which seems ideally tailored to his peculiar brand of fantastical whimsy.

Praise for the accomplishment, however, must be tempered by reservations about one limited but nearly fatal lapse of judgment. Toward the end, teen-ager Ralph, the hero, has too much to drink at a nitery after the prom, and he gets sick. His discomfiture is depicted in such gratuitously coarse detail that the scene itself becomes sickening. Mel Brooks sometimes ruins his best inspirations by turning needlessly gross—Shepherd goes the same route here, almost cancelling the wry appeal of the whole comedy in one blockheaded moment of overkill.

Aside from this gaffe, however, the style of "Phantom," as jointly directed by Fred Barzyk and David Loxton, remains remarkably true to its ruling spirit.

The story is a humorous documentation of the prom ritual, seen in retrospect from the standpoint of Ralph, the male human animal skulking through the impenetrable, fetid jungle of kidhood.

Ralph nurses fantasies about asking dreamboat Daphne Bigelow to be his prom date, but he ends up taking Wanda Hickey, the "nice girl" his Mom thinks would be an apt choice.



Roberta Wallach, left, and Andrea McCullough are high-schoolers at a junior prom, circa 1940, in Jean Shepherd's "The Phantom of the Open Hearth," which airs tonight on public television.

Enroute to this denouement, we get jaundiced slices of Americana via high school corridors, the family breakfast table, "dish night" at the Orpheum, the local soda fountain, and other native haunts.

Shepherd's locution has a mock-awesomeness all its own: "Daphne drifted into Biology 2, trailing mimosa blossoms and offering ecstasies not yet plumbed by human experience." But though Shepherd relishes the past,

he's not hostage to it. His hushed voice-over narration trembles with adolescent romanticism, but the caustic cackle which punctuates the flow throws the fantasy into sardonic relief.

A special word of appreciation for cameraman Peter Hoving and editor Richard Bartlett, who have used their crafts inventively to translate not just the substance but the tang of Shepherd's wit onto the screen.

The Washington Post

The Television Laboratory News

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The Television Laboratory at WNET/13

New NYSCA Artists-in-Residence to Be Announced

For the fourth time in a row, the Television Laboratory has received a major grant from the New York State Council on the Arts to support the work of New York State artists-in-residence. The grant, which totals \$48,000, will be divided among six to eight videomakers to be chosen shortly by a special panel.

New works will cover a broad range including both video art and non-fiction television pieces.

In the past, the New York State artists-in-residence program has proven to be a valuable source of public television programming. Both *Giving Birth* and *The Police Tapes* (see Page 1) two highly acclaimed documentaries which drew large viewing audiences, were a direct result of the previous year's NYSCA residency program.

Interested artists should contact the Television Laboratory before February 28.

Nam June Paik's Guadalcanal Requiem to Air Feb. 14

Nam June Paik, known as "the father of video art" and master of the avante garde, has completed his latest work, *Guadalcanal Requiem*, which airs in New York on February 14 at 10 PM.

Guadalcanal marked a turning point in the Pacific theater during World War II. Thirty-five years later, TV Lab artist-in-residence Nam June Paik and avant garde cellist and collaborator Charlotte Moorman travelled to Guadalcanal to ponder the passage of time there. Using a variety of film and tape formats, Paik has created an impressionistic portrait of Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands, past, present, and future — as the islanders await their coming independence later this year.

On February 10th, the team of Paik and Moorman celebrate another anniversary. On that day ten years ago, Nam June Paik and Charlotte Moorman were arrested on charges of obscenity when Ms. Moorman appeared on the New York Cinematique stage topless to play her cello during a Paik-conducted concert. On February 10th, 1977, at 8 PM, Ms. Moorman and Nam June Paik will appear on the Carnegie Hall stage to re-enact that concert. The program will also include portions of their trial as well as a selection of Paik/Moorman works.

Lab Program Nominated for Local New York Emmy

The Electronic Couch, a half-hour edition of the Lab's VTR second season, was nominated for a local New York City Emmy award. The program, produced by Philip Perlman, explored the use of videotape equipment in psychotherapy. Mr. Perlman and his Associate Producer Ruth Bonomo, illustrated the various uses of video in therapy by becoming the temporary "patients" of the therapists who participated in the program. Funds were provided by the New York State Council on the Arts.