

# Night Stalker not in old line tradition

By RODNEY HAMMACK  
Staff Writer

The "good guys" in television series have traditionally fallen into three categories: cops/private detectives, doctors, and lawyers. At one time the list of categories might have included marshalls, but only Matt Dillon has saved them from total extinction.

Of the three commercial networks, ABC has seemed more inclined to experiment with new characterizations. Such experimentation has resulted in the introduction to television of a new breed of heroes: a cyborg ("Six Million Dollar Man"), a master of martial arts ("Kung Fu"), comic book heroes ("Batman", "Green Hornet") and now — the investigative reporter.

In January, 1972, ABC introduced Darren McGavin as Carl Kolchak, a scruffy reporter who uncovers a vampire in Las Vegas. The Universal production of "The Night Stalker" was aired as an ABC "Movie of the Week" and tallied the highest ratings of any made-for-television movie, as of that date. McGavin repeated his role in an equally successful sequel entitled "The Night Strangler".

"The Night Stalker" became a weekly series in September with McGavin resuming his role along with Simon Oakland as his skeptical editor. The debut episode pitted Kolchak against Jack-the-Ripper in one of the most original treatments of the mystery murderer ever presented.

Producer Paul Playdon describes the series as "entertainment, not action-drama." But action is hardly scarce, with the first episode pitting

the Chicago police force against an undying murderer leaping from five-story buildings into a hail of bullets and tossing cars around like nerf balls — with Kolchak flashing pictures in the midst of it all.

After three more episodes with Kolchak encountering a zombie, a bone-marrow eating UFO occupant and a female vampire, ABC was faced with serious ratings problems. The entire Friday night lineup of "Kodiak," "Six Million Dollar Man," "Texas Wheelers," and "The Night Stalker" was yanked and replaced by a three week run of movies.

When "The Night Stalker" returned on Nov. 1 it was preceded by "Kung Fu" and "Six Million Dollar Man," "Kodiak" and "Texas Wheelers" becoming two of the first casualties of the season. The following weeks found Kolchak crossing paths with a werewolf, a doppelganger, a hound from hell, a giant Indian spirit, a haunted hospital, a monster attacking senior citizens, and a legendary creature created in the subconscious of a sleeping man experimentally deprived of dreams.

As unusual as the plots may seem, they are carried off in a refreshing manner. McGavin plays the role of the inquisitive reporter to the hilt, brandishing his tape recorder and pocket camera in the midst of ram-paging apparitions and falling bodies.

McGavin brings a distinct polished flair to "The Night Stalker", his fifth television series. Oddly enough, his first series was "Casey, Crime Photographer" back in the days of live television.



KOLCHAK

# Utility regulation possible; three bills waiting in Austin

AUSTIN (AP)—If lobbyists stack their defense to stop the creation of a state utilities commission, two other proposals might slip by which could trim monthly utility costs almost at once.

The commission proposal is the flagship of utility regulation, "the most important bill," says Sen. Lloyd Doggett, D-Austin, former president of the Texas Consumer Association.

But while Sen. Ron Clower, D-Garland, runs interference with that proposal, Doggett will introduce bills to restrict late charges, which run as high as several hundred per cent, and to require companies to reduce charges if they have provided poor service.

For example, a customer whose telephone is out of order most of a month would not have to pay his phone bill that month.

The late charges might be reduced to as low as 1 1/2 per cent per month, the standard interest charge for department stores and gasoline sales.

Neither Clower nor Doggett think it's a cinch that the legislature will create a utilities commission although a \$29.2 million lawsuit chal-

lenging Southwestern Bell Telephone Co.'s rates and mounting public dissatisfaction with utility rates has shifted the odds.

Clower says the odds have moved from 40-60 to 60-40, but Doggett is less optimistic: "Slightly better than 50-50." Both agree it would be fool-hardy to contend that the creation of a commission would suddenly force down utility rates.

Clower insists, however, that if his bill is adopted, "Rates are going to tend to level off, the requests for rate increases are going to be fewer, and whenever a rate increase is granted the people can have confidence in the fact that it was necessary."

He proposes a three-member elected commission to regulate rates and service on telephones, electricity, water and sewage. Cities would have an option whether to remain under state regulation.

In addition, Clower's subcommittee on consumer affairs is investigating allegations against Southwestern Bell, with a report expected before the legislature adjourns in June.

Several city councils seem hesi-

tant to grant phone rate increases until the suit against Bell in San Antonio is settled, and Harlingen rescinded a rate increase which it had granted. Bell has bought full-page advertisements to tell "The Other Side of the Story."

"What the Bell suit did," says Clower, "was crystalize attention on this issue utility regulation, as there were enough words written about it that people began to realize what the status of utility regulation was and they were really shocked."

Every state, except Texas, has a state agency to regulate telephone and Texas is one of only two states that do not regulate privately owned electric utilities. The Texas Public Utility Commission regulates natural gas but a Senate staff report noted that the commission "rules on the evidence submitted before it as a judicial body and as a result, consumers are very often not represented by any advocated in gas utility cases."

City councils are not equipped to deal with complex rate proposals. Clower says, and a staff report stated that of 400-500 rate requests in 1973 at least 60 per cent were granted without question.



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## Nonfarm jobs down

Nonfarm employment in the Bryan-College Station area decreased during the month of November mainly because of layoffs in manufacturing and construction. A drop was also noted in farm employment as the cotton harvest was completed.

The area labor supply continued to meet local demands. Texas Employment Commission placed 247 in nonfarm jobs. This compares with 314 in October and 319 during the same period a year ago.

There were 521 new applications in November. A month ago, 555 registered for work and a year earlier the figure was 462. Active jobseekers totaled 1,262, a minor increase over the prior month but 12.8 percent above the 834 in November

1973. The number of claimants for unemployment insurance continued to rise. The active claims file includes those who filed within the thirty days prior to December 1, 1974. There were 496 in the count at the close of November. Approximately twenty percent of these were claiming partial unemployment due to reduced work schedules in manufacturing.

Seventy veterans filed new applications, while 75 filed in October and 62 a year ago. The veteran active file dropped 21 from the previous month, but the 186 total was 67 above the count for November of last year. Thirty were placed in employment compared to 38 in October and 62 in November 1973.

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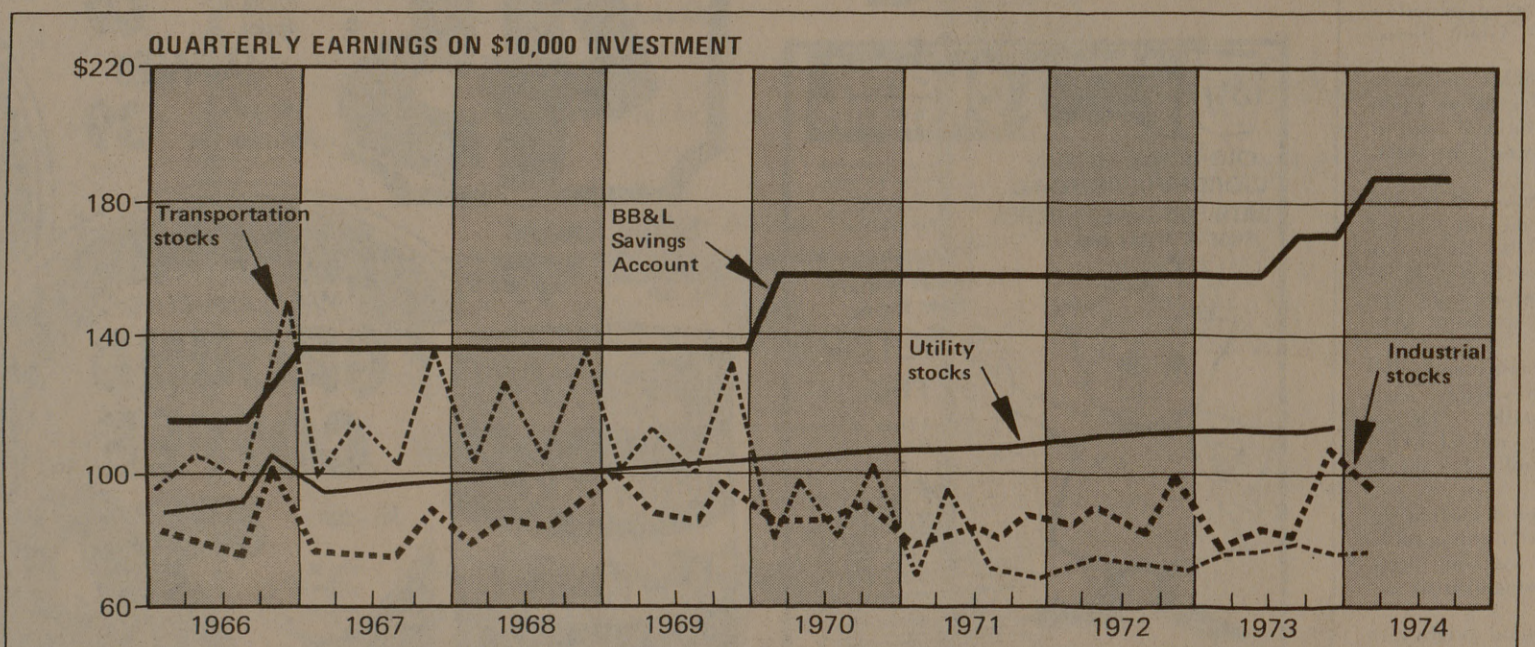
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compound interest so interest accrues on principal plus interest. Open end mutual funds, front-loaded with an 8 1/2 per cent sales commission, are dependent upon the stock market to show appreciation. It takes a healthy increase in market values to cover the initial commission — much less show profit.

At times, the so-called "glamour" investment must be sold at a loss (without dividend) if there is an urgent need for cash. BB&L savings accounts are always redeemable for full value (plus interest).

But that's another story.



SOURCE: U.S. Savings & Loan League and the Investment Company Institute. (Some reports, including Economic Indicators, published by the President's Council of Economic Advisors, express earnings for common stocks in much less favorable terms than indicated here. The case can be stated in a great many ways using different indices, weighted advances and declines, beta factors and regression equations, but simple lines tell the story...)