

Television now part of family

By Charlie Mustachia
Battalion Reporter
The television has become almost a member of the family in the modern American household. It is used as a babysitter, sleep-inducer, nightlight, companion and sometimes even as a form of entertainment.

By the time an average child reaches the age of 12, his TV-watching hours will more than double his classroom hours. At the age of 75, the man who watches the average three and one-half hours of television per day will have spent seventy thousand hours in front of his TV set — that's eight years of television.

Bill Strong, lecturer in speech communications at Texas A&M University and television advertising specialist, said the television has taken top priority in the typical living room.

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ment is, 'How can we best arrange the furniture so that we can watch the television?'"

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When the location of the cable hook-up determines the living room seating arrangement, Strong said, the viewer chooses the artificial life that television provides over the reality of human interaction.

Dr. Emily Davidson, Texas A&M psychology professor and children's television specialist, said, "Most people decide they're going to watch television

rather than watch a specific show; they sit there and watch whatever's on and the networks know it."

Networks don't allow for innovative programs, Davidson said. Because shows are cancelled quickly, new shows must be successful within the first few weeks. "The best thing to do is imitate something," she said. "Things that are different don't get much of a chance."

Critics agree that "M*A*S*H" provides a higher degree of intellectual stimulation than most television shows. In the Bryan-College Station area, cable TV makes "M*A*S*H" available more than once a day — avid fans can see three consecutive "M*A*S*H" episodes each weekday.

"There are certain shows we see as an art," Strong said, "and when you look at a piece of art over and over, you gain a greater appreciation with the repetition of experience."

But Human Behavior magazine's Ann Neitzke said repetition and non-selective TV viewing may be turning us into "videots."

Humanity perhaps invented a monster we can't control, Neitzke said. "In fact, the monster may very well be controlling us."

Because television viewing is sometimes considered an addiction, many viewers speak of "cutting down" on their watching habits or "weaning" their children from television.

Davidson advises the "addict" to cut back slowly on total time in front of the TV set, keeping a record of viewing hours. She said it is best to select the shows you want to watch and mark them in a television guide. Then watch only the shows you mark.

Strong goes a step further. "Put your television up in a cabinet or a closet," he said, "so that if you want to watch it you have to get it out and plug it in."

psychology graduate student suggests parents put locks and meters on their television sets to help break their children's TV habits. In an article in the Houston Chronicle, Patty Rooney-Rebeck said, "Unless you watch the meter tick by, you

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really don't realize exactly how much time you're spending in front of the tube."

Talk show host Dick Cavett said evenings, weeks, months and years of sitting in front of the television passively staring at the glowing box will "numb the brain."

The phrase "fireplace syndrome" describes the relaxed, hypnotic effect felt by viewers while staring at the television.

Strong said he suspects that sitting in a dark room staring at the 300,000 bulbs of flickering light, resembles a psychologist's hypnotic strobe effect. "It's not the programming that makes people watch television — the programming is terrible — it's the technology itself."

Whether television is seen in a hypnotic or conscious state, the habit of watching TV is hard to break because televisions are everywhere.

Many bars, nightclubs, restaurants and washaterias now have televisions. Some spots even have the large screen-projector televisions. Of course, no one is obligated to watch the screen while eating, drinking or

washing, but, the fact remains, the screen is there.

If "fireplace syndrome" is a reality, then diners, drinkers and even laundry washers might not have real control over their perception.

Neitzke called watching television "a very private act." She said Michael J. Arlen's statement concerning "what we do in these half-lit rooms of ours, on our own, our bodies sprawled before the set, our thoughts neither communicative nor far away" reveals that, while TV is a public medium, it is often "as private and mysterious as masturbation."

Strong said TV is like a sedative. "It allows you to escape," he said. "You have to think to read a book; you have to think to write; you have to think to carry on a conversation. You don't have to think to watch TV."

Davidson said college students tend to become disgusted with the time they spend — or waste — watching television more often than nine-to-five workers. When faced with a choice between hitting the books and staring at the tube, many students choose the latter.

"College students have a lot to do," Davidson said. "The average worker sits down at seven to watch TV and he does so until 10. He really doesn't feel too bad about that."

Davidson said television is so much a part of our culture that she would never quit watching TV altogether. She said because she doesn't watch "Saturday Night Live" many jokes and conversations with friends go right over her head.

"If a lot of people around you spend time talking about what's on television, you're out of those conversations."

Strong agrees that a positive effect of television is its ability to give millions of viewers a common experience, thus bringing them closer together.

He said the only problem emerges when we watch TV only because we've been conditioned to do so or because everyone else does so. "People watch 'Saturday Night Live' not because they are rewarded by it every week," he said, "but because something funny might happen this time."

Does TV effect behavior? Do technological aspects of television have hypnotic effects on viewers? Is television addicting?

David Loye, a writer for Psychology Today magazine, said if you ask these questions you'll get a vehement "yes" from some and a vehement

The phrase "fireplace syndrome" describes the relaxed, hypnotic effect felt by viewers.

"no" from others. "Whichever position they take," he said, "they're sure to agree on one thing: they really can't be sure without doing more research."

Barbara Walters, in a U.S. News & World Report interview, said TV isn't perfect but has its positive aspects. "People (Americans) know a great deal about a surprising variety of things," she said. "In great part, that's the result of television."

"Could it (television) do more? Yes. Is it a beast? No."

MONDAY TELEVISION

Midwest Community	2 KPRC	3 KBTX	6 KCEN	7 KTBC	8 KUHT	11 KHOU	13 KTRK	15 KAMU	24 KVUE	36 KTVV	39 KHTV	HBO
	2	5	6	7	8	11	13	12	9	7	10	4
7:00	Little House On The Prairie	That's Incredible	Little House On The Prairie	Private Benjamin The Two Of Us	Protecting You & Your Child From Rape	Private Benjamin The Two Of Us	That's Incredible	Masterpiece Theatre "Danger LXB"	That's Incredible	Little House On The Prairie	Solid Gold	Movie: "The High And The Mighty"
8:00	The Sacketts Part 2	Masada Part 2	The Sacketts Part 2	M.A.S.H. House Calls	Curtain! Great Performances	M.A.S.H. House Calls	Masada Part 2	KAMU Auction	Masada Part 2	The Sacketts Part 2	Testimony Of Two Men Part 1	"
9:00	"	"	"	Lou Grant	"History Of A Campaign That Failed"	Lou Grant	"	"	"	"	"	"
10:00	News	News	News	News	Dick Cavett Science South	News	News	"	News	News	National News Benny Hill	In Concert
11:00	Tonight	ABC News	Tonight	Carol Burnett & Friends	Quincy, M.E.	ABC News	"	ABC News	Tonight	"	"	Movie: "Tom"
12:00	"	Fantasy Island	"	Movie: "God Is My Co-Pilot"	Focus Energy Crossroads: South	Harry O	Bonanza	"	Fantasy Island	"	Wrestling	Horn
12:30	Tomorrow	"	Tomorrow	"	"	"	"	"	"	Tomorrow	"	"
12:45	"	"	"	"	Africa	"	Fantasy Island	Alfred Hitchcock	"	"	Ironside	Movie: "The Europeans"

Monday Specials

AFTERNOON
4:30 HBO THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER
5:30 HBO RASCAL DAZZLE
EVENING
6:30 8 SELF PROTECTION: PROTECTING YOU AND YOUR CHILD FROM RAPE
8:00 2 3 5 THE SACKETTS Tell fends off a pair of vengeance-seeking brothers, while Tye and Orrin cope with a bigot and a friend-turned-enemy. (Part 2) (R) □
9:30 13 24 MASADA Increased Judean attacks and pressure from Rome force General Silva to mount an attack on Masada by building a ramp up the side of the mountain, a task further complicated by the desert heat and the disapproval of his beloved Jewish slave, Sheva (Barbara Carrera). (Part 2) □
10:00 8 CURTAIN! Featured: the jazz and percussion ensembles of the University of Houston; Ellsworth Milbern and the Cambiata Soloists from Rice University; the University of Houston Opera Studio, featuring Diane Kessling and Bruce Ford.
11:00 39 TV AUCTION
12:00 39 TESTIMONY OF TWO MEN (Premiere) Martin Eaton (Steve Forrest), returning from the

Civil War, discovers that the woman (Barbara Parkins) he loves has married Adrian Ferrer (William Shatner), a wealthy aristocrat. Marjorie and Adrian have two children. Jonathan (David Birney), one of them, becomes a doctor and proposes marriage to Eaton's illegitimate daughter (Linda Purl).
EVENING
7:00 HBO "The High And The Mighty" (1954) John Wayne, Claire Trevor.

David Wayne. During treatment for a split personality, a neurotic woman manifests a third under hypnosis.
10:30 HBO "Tom Horn" (1980) Steve McQueen, Linda Evans. In early 20th-century Wyoming, a bounty hunter hired by a group of ranchers to track down rustlers is set up for a hanging by his employers. 'R'
12:10 HBO "The Europeans" (1979) Lee Remick, Lisa Eichhorn.

Monday Sports

EVENING
11:00 39 WRESTLING Host: Paul Boesch.

Monday Movies

AFTERNOON
3:00 13 *** "The Three Faces Of Eve" (1957) Joanne Woodward.

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