

A NEW HISTORY OF
DOCUMENTARY FILM

Jack C. Ellis and Betsy A. McLane



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Chapter Twelve

A New Channel: Documentary for Television, the "Golden Years," 1951-1971

English-language documentary films began as a regular part of theatrical film exhibition, from *Nanook of the North* in 1922 on. At the time of *Nanook* and before, the only way to see a movie was in a movie theater. The 35mm film stock standard for theatrical showings had a base of cellulose nitrate, which was highly flammable. It had to be projected from booths constructed in conformance with local ordinances. Exceptions, like the projection vans used by the Soviets and later by the British, were few.

In 1923, at the urging of educators, Eastman Kodak Company made available a film 16mm in width, with a cellulose acetate base. Because it was nonflammable (it was called "safety stock") and the narrower width made lighter equipment possible, portable 16mm projectors could be set up in schoolrooms, church basements, union halls—anywhere, in fact.

With 16mm projectors manufactured and sold and prints of films available for rental and purchase, the nontheatrical field became a recognizable entity by the late 1930s. World War II caused an explosion in the use of films as means of informing and educating. Following the war the nontheatrical field, with industrially sponsored and classroom films predominating, expanded enormously compared to prewar. But, as discussed in chapter ten, the expansion of the nontheatrical field did not at first work to the advantage of documentary. It didn't fit comfortably into the rather narrow requirements of industrial sales and promotion or of formal education. Nor did documentary have the access to theaters it had had during wartime.

As documentary was slipping into the background, losing financial support and audiences as well as earlier subject matters and purposes, a new channel for distribution and exhibition was opening up. This new channel would provide a

substantial and sustained basis of support. Thanks to television, more documentaries and related types of public information programs were shown to larger audiences than at any other time in history.

Historical Background

Telecasting had begun on an experimental and very limited basis in both Great Britain and the United States before the war—Britain being ahead of the U.S.—but military requirements of wartime had stopped further development. After the war, regular television broadcasting began in Great Britain, then in the United States, then in Canada. Let's discuss briefly the arrival of television in Britain and Canada before turning to and concentrating on commercial network television in the United States, as this chapter will mostly do.

In 1946 the British Broadcasting Corporation began regular telecasting. A Documentary Department was established in 1953, with documentary veteran Paul Rotha head of it until 1955. The BBC's first major documentary series was *Special Inquiry*, which ran from 1952 to 1957. Norman Swallow was its producer. But as a quasi-governmental organization supported by a tax on television sets, the BBC did not attract anything like the audience that would develop when commercial broadcasting was permitted to operate alongside BBC-TV from 1955 on. The Independent Television Authority (ITA, initially, later called Independent Television, ITV) ran programs produced by a number of commercial companies. Documentaries were included. For example, from Granada Television came *World in Action*, a public affairs and documentary series the title for which was borrowed from the wartime National Film Board of Canada. Thames Television subsequently produced the outstanding twenty-six-part documentary series about World War II, entitled *The World at War*. Scottish Television produced John Grierson's weekly television program devoted to documentary and experimental shorts, *This Wonderful World* (later changing its title to *John Grierson Presents*), from 1957 to 1968.

The situation in Canada was anomalous. Though the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (a government-related system) did not begin telecasting until 1952, most of Canada's population lived close enough to its southern border to receive U.S. television directly or via community antenna. Canada's bilingual culture was acknowledged by the CBC, with a French-language as well as an English-language network. Curiously, the National Film Board continued to work separately from CBC-TV, with little exchange between the two organizations of produced materials or means of distribution.

In the United States, 1946 was the year television was removed from the wartime freeze. In 1948 big-time TV was born. A network out of New York linked the major cities; the most popular shows were Milton Berle's *Texaco Star Theatre* comedy and Ed Sullivan's *Toast of the Town* variety show. By 1950 one hundred stations telecast to four million sets. In 1951 coaxial cable and micro-

wave relay connected the country coast to coast. (Not altogether coincidentally, that was also the year "The March of Time" ended.)

In the 1951–1952 season Edward R. Murrow and Fred W. Friendly's *See It Now* (out of their radio series *Hear It Now*) appeared. The 1952–1953 season contained *I Love Lucy* and *Victory at Sea* (supervised by historian Henry Salmon, Jr., and edited by Isaac Kleinerman). The situation comedy about a married couple (starring a married couple) and the twenty-six half-hour films about U.S. naval warfare in World War II (compiled from over six million feet of combat footage) are among the most successful and seminal television programs ever aired.

While dramatic and other entertainment programs shown on television came from outside producing agencies, production of documentaries was carried on primarily by the networks and local stations themselves. Both the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) and the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) established units for that purpose, with personnel initially drawn from the ranks of the nontheatrical documentarians. American Broadcasting Company (ABC) documentary production was later and weaker, with a news emphasis. The main function of these units was the creation of special programs, frequently non-sponsored, presented as prestige or public service features.

In 1953 what is now the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) began as National Educational Television (NET). This noncommercial network, supported by funds from the federal government, initiated and distributed substantial quantities of documentaries and public affairs materials. Its budgets tended to be smaller than those of the commercial networks, but it made up for this by purchasing independently produced documentaries and importing many significant documentary programs and series from abroad, principally from Britain.

The number of documentaries shown on commercial and public television during the peak years of network documentary from the fifties into the early seventies was very large indeed. What follows is a selective sketch of those series that were the longest running, contained some of the most memorable programs, and established forms and contents most prevalent among documentaries made for television.

Documentary Series

See It Now was the first regular documentary series. A sort of news magazine of feature stories in "The March of Time" tradition, it had a much quieter and more intimate tone suitable to the living room. Murrow and Friendly produced it for CBS; Murrow was the onscreen host and commentator. At first *See It Now*, like "The March of Time" and the present-day *60 Minutes*, presented several different stories in each half-hour program. In 1953 that format changed to include only one story a week. Among the *See It Now* programs best remembered are "Christmas in Korea" (1953), made during the Korean War, the several pro-

grams dealing with McCarthyism, including one in 1954 in which Senator McCarthy was given a program for reply (consistent with an American broadcasting dictum called "the Fairness Doctrine"), and a visit with nuclear physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer (1955).

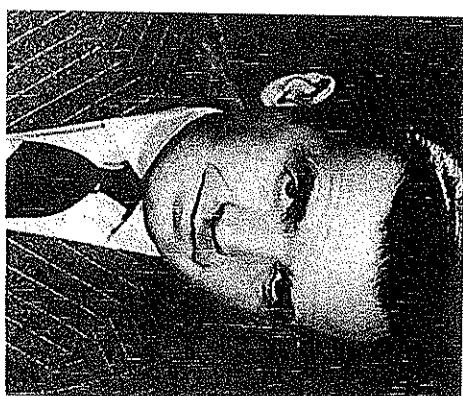
Like "The March of Time," too, *See It Now* contained consistent structural and stylistic characteristics—its format—which will be touched upon in a later section. A look at two programs may serve to give some sense of its distinctiveness.

"Argument in Indianapolis" (1953) presents opposing factions in that city when the American Civil Liberties Union, attempting to form a local chapter, is opposed by the American Legion post. One of the extraordinary things about this program is its balance in handling a controversial subject, necessary, no doubt, for it to be telecast at all. Depending on your sympathies, the Legion members become fascist monsters or upholders of true Americanism; the ACLU group, pleasant, sensitive intellectuals or dangerous radicals and subversives. At any rate, the faces, speech, and manner of the protagonists are caught more or less candidly. A remarkable study is offered of diverse ideologies and personalities that exist in uneasy relationship to one another within this republic.

"Segregation in Schools" (1954) was made the week following the Supreme Court decision that declared that separate education for blacks and whites was neither equal nor constitutional. It reports on reactions to the decision in two southern towns—Natchitoches, Louisiana, and Gastonia, North Carolina. What today seems a curious stiffness and formality—on the part of both black and white interviewees, with stand-up microphones visible and some statements read or rehearsed—may have to do with extremely strong feelings being controlled as well as a less flexible technology than is presently available. When feeling does break through—actual expressed emotion of an older black woman, a black high school youth, an elderly white woman, and a black male teacher—it is moving and becomes real in a way that helps us to understand more fully what is involved than do the prepared statements.

In 1955 Alcoa (Aluminum Company of America) withdrew its sponsorship of *See It Now*. The program then changed from regularly scheduled weekly half hours to hour-long programs that appeared at intervals—"specials," in effect. Media critic Gilbert Selles quipped that it had become *See It Now and Then*. In 1958 *See It Now* was terminated, to be followed by *CBS Reports*.

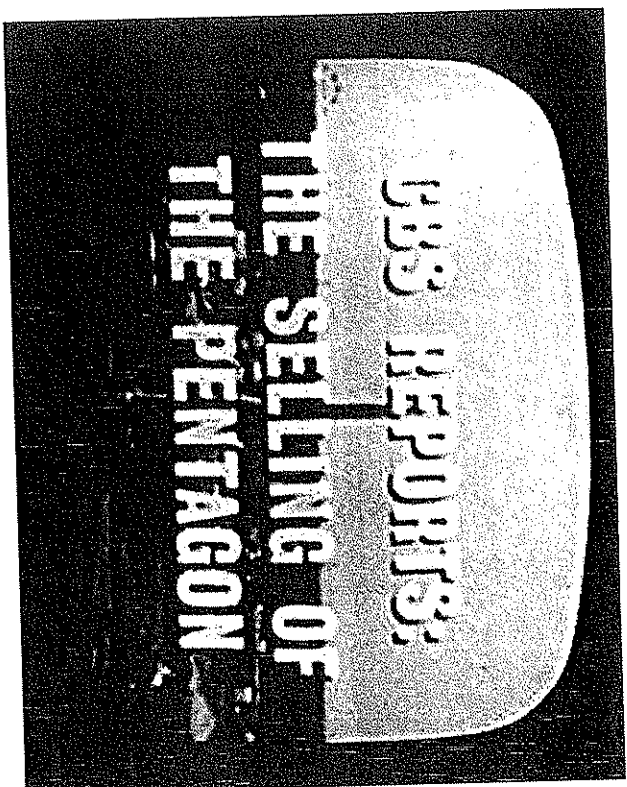
CBS Reports developed its own excellence. "The Population Explosion" (1959), while attempting to cover the problem generally, used India as its example. Spokespersons offering various solutions to overpopulation were presented. "Lippmann on Leadership" (1960) allowed the newspaper columnist and political philosopher to express his views. Murrow's last program for the series, "Harvest of Shame" (1960), was about the exploitation and hardships suffered by migrant agricultural workers. It was aired on Thanksgiving Day. Murrow left CBS to become director of the United States Information Agency. Subsequent



Edward R. Murrow as seen on a television screen



"Harvest of Shame" showed to critical outcry on Thanksgiving Day as part of the *CBS Reports* series (U.S., 1960, David Lowe). J. Fred MacDonald



A shot from a television screen of "The Selling of the Pentagon" (U.S., 1971, Peter Davis)

CBS Reports included "Biography of a Bookie Joint" (1961), a neat job of investigative reporting by Jay McMullen, "Hunger in America" (Martin Carr and Peter Davis, 1968), which is credited with facilitating the introduction of the federal food stamps program, and "The Selling of the Pentagon" (1971, Peter Davis), a critical examination of the military's extensive public relations activities.

NBC's response to *See It Now* was the quite different *Project XX* series, which began in 1954. It grew out of the success of *Victory at Sea*, and its production unit included many of the same personnel. Rather than a weekly series, however, *Project XX* offered occasional hour-long specials. Like *Victory at Sea* its programs were compilation films whose origins could be traced back to the "Why We Fight" series, which in turn could be traced back to "The March of Time." *Project XX*'s programs were devoted to recreating aspects of the history of the century (hence *XX*) using existing footage—newsreel, documentary, and feature—and occasional reenactments. Among those that attracted most attention were "Nightmare in Red" (1955), which chronicled the rise of Soviet communism, "The Twisted Cross" (1956), which did the same for German nazism, and "The Real West" (1961). The latter, produced and directed by Donald Hyatt, used paintings and photographs—that is, still visual material—music and words of the era to capture the spirit of a particular time and place. (It was a forerunner of the subsequent Ken Burns historical series.) The commentary, written by Phil



"The Battle of Newburgh," NBC *White Paper* series (U.S., 1962, Arthur Zegart), J. Fred MacDonald

Reisman, Jr., and spoken by Gary Cooper, took on a period flavor as well. Regarding the great cattle drives from Texas to the railroad towns of Kansas and Missouri: "The longhorns were as treacherous as the backlash of a bullwhip. Later, the breed was white-faced and dimple-kneed, but spookier than a wing-busted bird in cat country."

The NBC series comparable to CBS's *See It Now* and CBS Reports was *White Paper*, begun in 1960, with Irving Gitlin as executive producer. For the most part it stuck even closer to current or recent headlines. "The U-2 Affair" (1960) dealt with an incident that exposed U.S. aerial spying on the Soviet Union. Other programs also announced the currency of their topics in their titles: "Angola: Journey to a War" (1961), "The Death of Stalin" (1963), "Cuba: Bay of Pigs" (1964). A domestic local situation that had become national news was examined in "The Battle of Newburgh" (1962). At issue was the controversy that developed over the decision by the city manager of this New York town to rid the community of "welfare chislers."

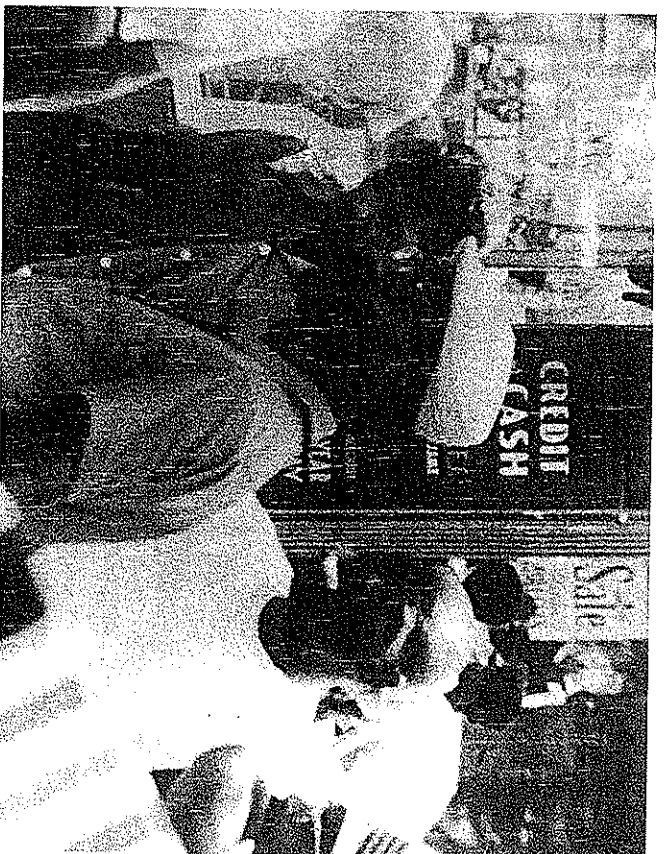
The *Twentieth Century* weekly series, which began on CBS in 1957, was sponsored by the Prudential Insurance Company and produced by Burton Benjamin and Isaac Kleinerman. Its programs were mostly half hour, though a few were

hour-long. Many of these were historical compilations, such as "Trial at Nuremberg" (1958), "Paris in the Twenties" (1960), and "The Western Hero" (1963). The format of "From Kaiser to Fuehrer" (1959) is typical. Host Walter Cronkite introduces the program then retreats offscreen to voice-over commentary. It owes a debt to *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* and "Why We Fight," of course. Clips from German films of the twenties are its main visual content. In addition to newsreels, extensive use is made of *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* and to *Variety*, a fictional feature. The cutting pace is rapid and the editing skilful; a full orchestral score contributes to continuity and dramatic effect.

Other *Twentieth Century* programs were on contemporary subjects and used freshly shot material and interviews: "Ireland: The Tear and the Smile" (1961), "The Burma Surgeon Today" (1961), and "So That Men Are Free" (1962). Wilfrid Van Dyke directed the last (and a number of other *Twentieth Century* films including "Ireland," above, and "Sweden" (1961). In 1966 *The Twentieth Century* became *The Twenty-First Century* before its final season of 1970-1971. The new title was intended to suggest a shift in emphasis to scientific development and the future.

ABC-TV distinguished itself with *Close-Up!*, a series using cinéma vérité—more precisely, the American version of it called direct cinema. This new technique, made possible by new technology, is the subject of chapter fourteen. The idea for the series came from *Primary* and *On the Pole* (both 1960), films produced by Robert Drew Associates (which included, along with Drew, Richard Leacock, D. A. Pennebaker, Terence Macartney-Filigate, Albert and David Maysles, Hope Ryden, Gregory Shuker, among others) for Time-Life Broadcast. Not all the Drew Associates were on every film, of course, but there were many of them. These undirected sync-sound essays were of the Wisconsin presidential Democratic primary contest between Hubert Humphrey and John F. Kennedy, and of the Indianapolis automobile race, following driver Eddie Sachs. They were shown on four local stations owned by Time, Inc. ABC was sufficiently impressed to hire Drew Associates to produce five one-hour documentaries for the *Close-Up!* series: "Yanki No!" (1960), "X-Pilot" (1960), "The Children Were Watching" (1960), "Kenya" (1961), and "Adventures on the New Frontier" (1961). The first had to do with anti-Americanism in Latin America. The subject of the second is the final test flight of a new airplane and the personality of the test pilot. The third was shot in New Orleans during one week of a school integration crisis. It presents the attitudes of white segregationists and their effects on a black family whose daughter is supposed to be one of the first to attend a previously all-white school. Finally "Adventures on the New Frontier" presents "a day in the life of" John F. Kennedy in the White House.

Drew Associates did not continue on *Close-Up!* but the executive producer of that series, John Secondari, appeared to have learned from them and produced valuable programs using direct cinema technique with his own personnel. Nicholas Webster was one of these, who produced and directed "Walk in My Shoes"

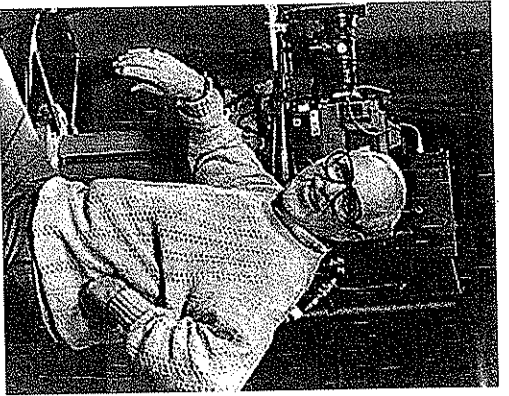


"Walk in My Shoes," *Close-Up!* series (U.S., 1961, Nicholas Webster). J. Fred MacDonald

(1961). It presents the anger, resentment, and feelings of frustration of black Americans largely from their point of view and in interview situations of one sort or another. Webster's "Meet Comrade Student" (1962) examines Soviet education after the launching of *Sputnik*, which had caused Americans to feel left behind in scientific knowledge and training.

During this same period young producer David L. Wolper was pioneering a different type of television documentary. Like Robert Drew, but unlike most of the others then producing television documentaries, Wolper did not work for any of the three networks. Yet he wanted to sell his shows to the networks. In 1957, when a representative from Artdino, the official U.S. film distributor for the U.S.S.R., mentioned to him that he had footage of the Soviet space missions to sell, Wolper conceived the idea of creating a documentary on the rockets and the then-hot space race, and selling it to the networks as a completed project. Financing it himself, he enlisted the help of friends Jack Haley, Jr., and Mel Stuart to locate footage, shoot interviews, and create *The Race for Space* (1958).

At that point Wolper was not a documentarian but a man who had decided to be in the entertainment business. His experience in film had mainly been selling old Hollywood movies to individual television stations. This background paid off handsily with *The Race for Space*, since in these years the networks refused



David L. Wolper. The Wolper Organization

to broadcast any documentary that was not made by their own in-house production units. Worries about the Fairness Doctrine and sponsor accountability made network executives loath to buy from outsiders. Wolper was able to convince individual stations, both independents and network affiliates, to buy and air *The Race for Space*. It ran on various stations for one week in April 1960 and proved to be a huge critical and financial success. It was even nominated for an Academy Award, the first made-for-television documentary to be so recognized. The Wolper empire and a substantial American television syndication business was born.

Over the next forty years Wolper and his teams were responsible for fifty-eight television documentary specials and twenty documentary series consisting of 347 episodes—a prodigious output. (He is perhaps best known, though, for his fictional miniseries—fourteen of them at 108 hours, including *Roots* and *The Thorn Birds*.) He also produced twenty theatrical motion pictures, many of them successful documentaries. The various Wolper companies provided hands-on training grounds for at least two generations of documentarians, and he has won Oscars, Peabody's, and Lifetime Achievement Awards galore.

Documentary history has tended to pass over the importance of David Wolper's work for a number of reasons. He always asserted that he was in the business to make money, and at this he was more successful than any other documentarian in history. He didn't claim that his films could change the world, yet many of them deal compassionately with serious social and political issues. He was located on the West Coast, in Hollywood, and in later years had offices on the Warner Brothers lot rather than in New York City, the traditional center

of documentary production. He has said that he didn't know his films were not supposed to be entertaining in addition to being informative, and admits to being a passionate and very adept salesman—a trait he shares with the most effective documentarians from Robert Flaherty and John Grierson to Ken Burns and Michael Moore. All of these men could sell their ideas to funders, their films to distributors, and themselves to the public.

By contrast Frederick Wiseman, one of the most skilled and talented makers of direct cinema, produced for public television. *High School* (1968), *Law and Order* (1969), *Hospital* (1970), and *Basic Training* (1971) were supported in varying proportions by the Public Broadcasting Service, WNET Channel 13 in New York City, and income from nontheatrical rentals of his films. After *Basic Training* Wiseman contracted with WNET to do one documentary each year to play on the PBS network. His subjects have been various American institutions, the titles generally making clear which one. Wiseman's films will be discussed in chapter fifteen.

Among the television documentary news magazines the biggest success story to date, of course, is CBS's *60 Minutes*, produced by Don Hewitt, which began in 1968. It brought documentary-like content and production methods into commercial television just as "The March of Time" earlier had introduced its own kind of nonfiction forms and subjects into movie theaters. Like "The March of Time," *60 Minutes* developed a format that fit the medium within which it was received. In this case, since the medium was television, its origins are directly traceable to *See It Now* and *CBS Reports*. In *60 Minutes* the American journalistic term "news story" is taken quite literally. The several stories of each program—some light, some serious—use a combination of aggressive investigative reporting, personable on-the-air reporters (Mike Wallace, Morley Safer, Harry Reasoner, Diane Sawyer), and tight narrative structures. The program was successful not only in comparison with other television news, public affairs, and documentary series, but reached the Top Ten among television shows generally in terms of numbers of viewers attracted and amount of money earned. The success of *60 Minutes* was also awarded the compliment of imitation, and the magazine format made up of short segments gradually replaced traditional documentary forms on television.

Special Characteristics of Television Documentary

Many of the new elements common to documentaries made for television can be traced to the new technological characteristics of this electronic means of distribution—exhibition, and to the new relationship with the audience sitting—as individuals or members of small family groups—at home. Television emerged from the earlier forms of radio broadcasting and retained practices common to it.

In regard to the content of documentaries made for television, three major types predominated throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and they correspond to emphases of the documentary series and specials discussed above. First is the documentary based on a newsworthy subject, something that is of current, widespread interest. This is television's major contribution to the evolution of documentary subjects and forms, a genre in which it has been uniquely effective. See *If Now* and *CBS Reports* offered noteworthy examples; among them "Annie Lee Moss Before the McCarthy Committee" (1954) and "Protective Tariff vs. Free Trade" (1957) in the former; "The Business of Health: Medicine, Money and Politics" (1961) and "Storm Over the Supreme Court" (1963) in the latter. Second are the historical and often nostalgic subjects of the compilation series and programs—*Project XX* ("The Innocent Years," 1957; "The Story of Will Rogers," 1961) and much of *The Twentieth Century* ("The Olympics," 1959; "Turn of the Century," 1960). Lastly there is what could be called "human interest," the curiosity we all have about others, their personalities, and their problems. This sort of content is most manifest in the use of direct cinema, in the early *Close-Up!* ("The Miner's Lament," 1963; "A Vanishing Breed: Portrait of a Country Editor," 1963) and in the Frederick Wiseman features (*Hospital*, 1970, and *Basic Training*, 1971, for example).

The range of subjects of television documentaries may be wider as well as different from that of earlier documentaries. A kind of "entertainment documentary" emerged—the nostalgia and human interest categories—in which the issues no longer were of national concern or even social significance. Lyman Bryson observed, in his essay "Popular Art" (in *The Communication of Ideas*, 1948), that the function of the mass media, the experience they offer, is more like that of gossip than like that of traditional art forms. Certainly television offers materials as diverse as those of a neighbor talking to us over the back fence—in our electronic global village, a concept another media scholar, Marshall McLuhan, suggested (in *Understanding Media*, 1964). Scandalous secrets are revealed (daytime dramas), amusing anecdotes told (situation comedies), conundrums posed (game shows), local events recounted (news), and the like. This gossipy quality reached its apex—or nadir—in the reality programming of the twenty-first century.

Another McLuhan concept was that television is a "cool" medium. Its lack of technological refinement of image and sound means the viewer has to complete the message rather than having it beamed at him with the visual and emotional intensity of movies or the auditory fidelity and richness of radio. To some, the content of television documentaries seemed less compelling, slower paced, more redundant—than that of films made to be shown in theaters. In this view *The City or Listen to Britain* would be regarded as "hotter" than *See It Now* or Mike Wallace interviewing on *60 Minutes*.

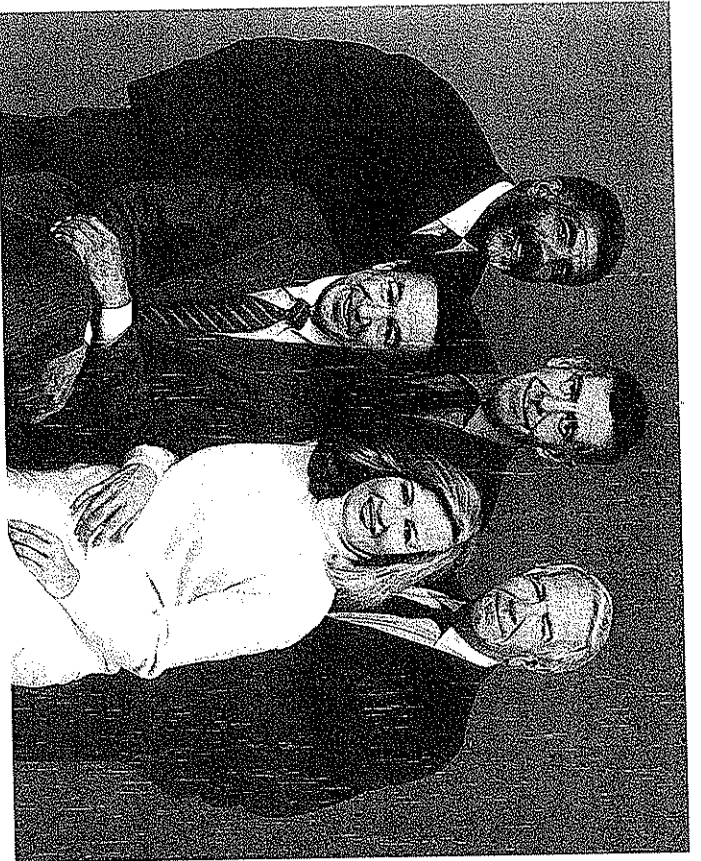
At the same time, television documentary tended to maintain a small-scale intimacy. In *The Twentieth Century*, for example, a program on "Gandhi" (1959)

is as much about the man as about the magnitude of his accomplishments; it seems quite unlike *The River* or films of the "Why We Fight" series. Television documentaries often centered not only on individuals but on values (ethical, spiritual, psychological) rather than on material concerns (work, housing, poverty), as did earlier documentaries. (Perhaps this difference was due as much to changed postwar preoccupations as to the influence of television; but whatever the cause, the difference is evident.)

Frequently in the television documentary the commentator was the star and appeared on camera. In earlier documentaries the commentator was usually anonymous and unobtrusive; his voice was heard over the images, and he never appeared onscreen. At most he added a bit of emotional color. The few exceptions that occurred seemed awkward at the time. In one of the "brotherhood films," mentioned in chapter ten, Frank Sinatra talked and sang directly to the audience. You might have felt embarrassed somehow (for him, or for yourself), knowing that he was not really in the theater, as he was pretending to be, but out in Hollywood several months ago. Television created the illusion, and stressed it, that all of it was "live," though of course most of it was not. We knew that the images and sounds were constantly there in the TV set, just as electricity was in the wires and water in the pipes, ready to be turned on at any time. The celebrity commentators—Ed Murrow, Walter Cronkite, Charles Kuralt, Chet Huntley, Dan Rather, et al.—fed into and emphasized the quality of liveness. The audience tuned in to see what Ed was offering on a Friday night. He talked directly to us from the control room, his reporters available to come in over the monitors as he called on them. (Actually, given the technology available at the time, they were filmed beforehand with the film flown to New York City, processed in the lab, and edited before being aired.) The scenes in *See It Now* were shot more as if they were being captured live and undirected than they were in earlier documentaries.

And perhaps out of courteous respect for us (the audience), the commentator's own point of view in what was said and in what was chosen to be shown was generally withheld, or balanced—or maybe just ambivalent, and therefore ambiguous. Exceptions to this rule sometimes created a furor. "Harvest of Shame" (*CBS Reports*, 1960, David Lowe) drew outraged protests from the agriculture industry. "The Selling of the Pentagon" (*CBS Special*, 1971, Peter Davis) provoked a congressional committee to investigate the fairness of its presentation and threaten to subpoena the president of CBS, Frank Stanton, to force him to turn over outtakes (footage not used), sound recordings, and production notes from the program. "Sixteen in Webster Groves" (*CBS Special*, 1966, Arthur Baran) is an exceptional case. In a sequel, "Webster Groves Revisited," parents and other residents of this posh suburb of St. Louis were permitted to offer a counter-view to the one presented by the teenagers in the first program.

In documentaries made for television there was an increased use of sync sound, especially talk; interviews were used much more extensively than they



Star reporters of the *60 Minutes* series, left to right: Ed Bradley, Mike Wallace, Morley Safer, Diane Sawyer, and Harry Reasoner (U.S., 1988, CBS News).

had been prior to television. The sound track carried at least as much content as the visual track, and the visuals tended to be less rich and interesting than in nontelevision documentaries. In the early days of television, a former radio executive made the egregious blunder at a sales meeting of proudly announcing that more people were listening to television than ever before. As a result of this balance between words and images, the *auteurs* ("authors") of television were usually the producers, writers, and commentators rather than the directors, as was more often the case in films made for theatrical exhibition. A redundancy developed in the documentary made for television that permitted the viewer-listener to go to the refrigerator for a beer and still follow what was going on, or vacuum the living room carpet while keeping an eye on the tube without missing much.

As already noted, television documentaries tended to appear in the context of a series. Before television this was true only in exceptional instances such as "The March of Time" or "Why We Fight." Television documentaries also had to fit into quite precise airtimes, down to the second, allowing pauses for and building structures to accommodate the commercial breaks. The running times of the earlier documentaries varied considerably and were determined, to consid-

erable extent at least, by the form and content of each film: *The Spanish Earth* runs fifty-five minutes; *And So They Live*, twenty-four; *London Can Take It*, nine; *Fires Were Started*, seventy-two; and so on. The fixed times of television resulted in some strains, with insufficient time available to deal adequately with a subject, or padding required to fill out the half hour or hour even though less time would have been sufficient. In the series context and in the daily flow of television programming, it may have been difficult for particular documentaries to offer the kind of aesthetic experience or to achieve the social impact on those they did reach (though they reached many more people instantly) to the extent that some documentaries shown in theaters and to nontheatrical audiences may have done. Lyman Bryson, again, doubted that the mass media could do very much about educating people soundly or altering their opinions on the subjects with which they dealt. He thought the significance of the media in relation to their effects on social attitudes and behavior was essentially to call public attention to matters that seemed important to the producers of media. Television became virtually *the* mass medium, certainly as far as documentary was concerned. It was the best qualified of any medium of art and communication yet devised to quickly call large numbers of people's attention to various subjects. It established its ability to do that—and sometimes did it superbly. In the following chapters documentaries will be dealt with individually without consideration of the channel in which they were distributed-exhibited.

Films of the Period

1952-53

Victory at Sea series (Henry Salomon and Isaac Kleinerman)

1953

"Argument in Indianapolis" (See *It Now* series, Edward R. Murrow and Fred W. Friendly)

"Christmas in Korea" (same as above)

1954

"Edward R. Murrow Talks on Senator McCarthy" (same as above)

"Segregation in Schools" (same as above)

1955

"Nightmare in Red" (*Project XX* series, Salomon and Kleinerman)

1956

"Out of Darkness" (*The Search* series, Albert Wasserman)

"The Twisted Cross" (*Project XX*, Salomon and Kleinerman)

1957

"The Innocent Years" (*Project XX*, Salomon)

1958

"From Kaiser to Fuehrer" (*The Twentieth Century* series, Burton Benjamin and Kleinerman)

"The Population Explosion" (CBS Reports series, Av Westin)

1960

"The Children Were Watching" (*Close-Up* series, Robert Drew Associates, Richard Leacock)

"Harvest of Shame" (CBS Reports, Murrow, Friendly, and David Lowe)

"Paris in the Twenties" (*The Twentieth Century*, Benjamin and Kleinerman)

"The U-2 Affair" (*White Paper* series, Wasserman)

"Yanki Noi" (*Close-Up*, Robert Drew Associates, Leacock, Albert Maysles, and D. A. Pennebaker)

1961

"Angola: Journey to a War" (*White Paper*, Wasserman)

"Biography of a Bookie Joint" (CBS Reports, Jay McMullen)

"The Business of Health: Medicine, Money and Politics" (CBS Reports, Stephen Fleischman)

"Ireland: The Tear and the Smile" (*The Twentieth Century*, Benjamin and Kleinerman)

"New York in the Twenties" (same as above)

"The Real West" (*Project XX*, Donald B. Hyatt)

"Vincent Van Gogh: A Self-Portrait" (NBC-TV Special, Ray Garner)

"Walk in My Shoes" (*Close-Up*, Nicholas Webster)

1962

"The Battle of Newburgh" (*White Paper*, Wasserman)

"Meet Comrade Student" (*Close-Up*, Webster)

"Shakespeare: Soul of an Age" (NBC-TV Special, Guy Blanchard)

"So That Men Are Free" (*The Twentieth Century*, Willard Van Dyke)

1963

"The Business of Gambling" (*White Paper*, Arthur Zegart)

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