

# 'Glass Teat' Ellison's angry view of television

By TOM MARCINKO  
Collegian Staff Writer

"Hello. You ought to be frightened. You ought to be scared witless. You think you're safe, all snuggled down in front of your picture tube, don't you?...They've lulled you. McLuhan was right: give me your young every Saturday morning from eight till noon, and they're mine till I send them off to die in a new war."

In that unassuming manner, Harlan Ellison, one of the most respected writers in Hollywood, begins "The Glass Teat," a collection of Los Angeles Free Press columns "intended to look at what's

## Impressions

happening around us, culturally and politically and aesthetically, but in terms of what television is saying."

This is a great book for anybody who wonders why the networks insist on feeding hours of prime-time trash to millions of viewers—and why the viewers don't object.

Ellison writes with a style balanced on a knife-edge between white-hot anger and devastating sarcasm. "Not only are the network potentates a gaggle of cringing, petrified, spineless twerps, they are ripe patsys for extortion and blackmail."

The networks will do anything to avoid a conflict with the sponsors, the public or the government, Ellison claims. Instead of playing the rule of social critic and a force for change as TV should, the networks rubber-stamp government decisions and blindly accept conventional mores.

The viewers are to blame as much as the networks, Ellison says, for accepting the "Common Man" philosophy portrayed on countless family dramas and sitcoms.

"The time for worshipping the Common Man is past," Ellison writes. "We can no

longer tolerate him, or countenance his stupidity. He is the man who keeps our air polluted, our country at war, our schools infested with police statism, our lives on the brink of oppression and our futures sold out for oil leases.

"...We must kill off the Common Man in us and bring forth the Renaissance Man," Ellison concludes.

Ellison is aware of the dangers of censorship, "having been a man who lost two grand when a segment of a show he wrote was canceled for a rerun because it was too violent."

Violence is honest, Ellison says. "It says precisely what it means. There is no arguing with it. It makes a clearly defined dramatic point."

Much of "The Glass Teat" is a nostalgia trip through the Bad Old Days, since the collected columns originally were written between October 1968 and January 1970.

The political atmosphere of the country has changed, but television really hasn't; new programs and new faces dot the screens, but the level of trash on TV, with few exceptions, remains constant. Any point that Ellison made about 1968 TV is still valid today, "MASH" notwithstanding.

Ellison, having written for "Star Trek," "The Outer Limits," "The Man from U.N.C.L.E." and other shows, knows what he is talking about.

In essence his thesis is that George Orwell had only half the truth. When television watches us, we'll be in trouble. But we are already in trouble when we watch television with a blind eye and sleeping brain.

"The Glass Teat" is recommended as an inside look at TV for everybody who gave it up, and anybody who still watches. Harlan Ellison will shock you out of your complacency.

# Irvis: House work frustrating

HARRISBURG (AP)—As House debate bogged down last week in a minor procedural dispute, Democratic floor leader K. Leroy Irvis turned to nearby newsmen and described his occasional frustration.

"Running this House on a modern basis is like putting a

## AP news analysis

150-horsepower engine in a buggy," Irvis said with a tired smile.

Leaders have been trying for years to streamline legislative operations, to get more issues settled more satisfactorily in less time.

Irvis is one of the major

cogs in the latest efficiency effort, based on changes in legislative scheduling.

Except for regular vacations, Pennsylvania's House and Senate have become accustomed to meeting throughout the year, for two or three days in an average week.

Other states seem to manage just as well with high-paced legislative sessions that adjourn after several months.

This year, House Speaker Herbert Fineman proposed alternating periods of work by the 21 committees with floor sessions where all 203 members vote.

The theory is to provide big

chunks of time for committee to study problems and recommend solutions, without interruption for floor sessions.

In the past, committee chairmen often sandwiched meetings between floor sessions and party caucuses. When the House was in session from Monday to Wednesday, Tuesday morning was popular for committee meetings.

Fineman's plan has devoted entire weeks to committee work, upsetting some lawmakers who journeyed to Harrisburg only to find their committee meetings cancelled. Scheduling conflicts initially

left 46 lawmakers facing instructions to be in two different places at one time.

But Fineman stuck to his plan despite the complaints. He predicted it would mean better legislation emerging from committee and more enlightened work on the House floor, because lawmakers would be better prepared.

The test cam last week when the House held its first extended voting session. Legislators spent three eight-hour days on the floor, passing 42 bills and eight resolutions.

But the quality of their work was disputed. A bill creating a state

consumer advocate was viewed as flawed by both its supporters and opponents. Such disagreements may be inevitable when compromises are made.

Fineman conceded there are bugs to be worked out of his system. In the middle of the week, he called Democratic committee chairmen together to warn that they must devote more detailed attention to legislation.

Fineman said he already sees advantages to his system. He claims individual lawmakers are more prepared.

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## Nixon reacts to Faisal death

SAN CLEMENTE, Calif. (UPI)—In a rare public statement, former President Richard M. Nixon expressed sorrow yesterday on the death of Saudi Arabia's King Faisal whom he described as "my friend for 20 years."

The statement, telephoned

to news media by a secretary, said:

"The tragic death of King Faisal is an immense loss to his country, to the world, and to the cause of Arab-American friendship to which he was dedicated.

"A staunch defender of his

people's interests, King Faisal also brought a strong voice of reason and moderation to the search for peace not only in the Middle East but in the world.

"Mrs. Nixon joins me in extending out deepest sympathy to his family."

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