



## Cable TV falls short of promises

Cable TV is the stuff pipe dreams are made of. After three months of being a paid subscriber in Plymouth, I'm disappointed.

Disregard all of the rhetoric regarding political pay-offs. Disregard which company claims to be best. Disregard the fact that the local government, not the subscriber, has the choice in companies.

But don't disregard all the company's promises. These are the pipe dreams.

Cable TV has been around for 30 years. To date, 4,200 cable systems serve 44 million Americans in 20 percent of all homes, including Plymouth and Redford Township. It is predicted this number will double in the next 15 years, and much of that expansion will be in the rest of suburbia.

**BUT WHAT,** you in other communities are asking, does the system deliver today?

I listened eagerly to the sales pitch. No question in my mind that I was willing to shell out \$6.95 per month for the 36-channel capacity. This capacity was due to increase to 52 in spring. The potential viewing possibilities for the family were exciting. Capacity and potential are the key words.

The salesperson pointed out that independent networks — including those from Atlanta and Chicago along with the famous Ted Turner Cable Network News — would add a variety of programs. A children's channel would broadcast "Sesame Street" and "Electric Company"-type programs. Live sports would be telecast 24 hours a day.

And my political curiosity would be satisfied by gavel-to-gavel coverage of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Community access channels would be particularly valuable. Channels have been leased by the public library, Schoolcraft College, the city of Plymouth and Plymouth Township. We would be able to watch events going on near home. And we could "get religion." If we wished, because one channel is devoted exclusively to Christian programming.

First-run movies would be available if we were willing to pay additional money for any one of several movie channels. They would carry "10," "The Black Hole," "Being There," and "Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory."

**OTHER EXCITING** advantages were yet to come.

We could be wired for a security system, enabling us to have our home monitored for fire, burglary and medical emergencies. Eventually, home banking and shopping would be an added feature. A two-



Nancy Austin

way response system known as QUBE, already in effect in Columbus, Ohio, would also be possible.

Following the sales talk, I had visions of being able to keep a vigilant watch on the city government from my living room, and maybe even be able to respond to questions and issues. We had visions of instant police and fire protection while away from the house. And maybe I could even take a class or two conducted by the local community college.

If I felt programs were objectionable for my children, I could buy a key for \$1 to lock out that particular channel.

### NOW THE REALITY.

Once we began watching, we learned that many of the local access channels would present printed messages only. That hadn't been explained by the salesperson.

The Schoolcraft College channel says we can buy tickets to its cultural events. Plymouth Township flashes a printed message saying the channel will print important messages. The city of Plymouth reminds recent citizens of the nutrition program available to them, and Plymouth-Canton Community Schools flash messages of meetings.

There is no chance to take a college class. City government meetings are not televised, and there is no way to respond to issues.

The security system is still under study as is the possibility of shopping at home, banking, traffic control and the QUBE.

There is no program guide for the independent network program. It is, therefore, impossible to know which sports programs are on, which programs come to us from Chicago or Atlanta, or which religious program may hold interest. Children have no idea what is coming their way, either.

One must channel-hop and hope to strike it rich. The much-touted lock-out key is not available.

A CALL TO the cable company went like this:

Q. "Can I buy a lock-out key?"

A. "Well, Mrs. Austin, that (lock-out key) didn't turn out to be very much in demand. And I only had a minimum number of keys in stock. I am out of stock now."

Q. "Are you going to order more keys?"

A. "Not right now. We are reorganizing now, and it will take a special device added to the TV set that might prove to be very costly. So we may not provide you with that key."

Q. "By the way, what about the home security system and the QUBE system?"

A. "That is under consideration, but not available now. We have to study these things carefully. Sometimes, they aren't profitable. We have to determine demand. We may even take some surveys."

Q. "What about a program guide?"

A. "That's not available yet, but all you have to do is watch channel 8, and it will tell you what's on."

I TURN TO channel 8. It tells me what movies will be on HBO. I already know that from the TV book that comes with my daily paper.

Channel 31 has begun broadcasting from Ann Arbor. I'm locked out of that choice. I have to wait for the cable company to tune in before I can.

Community programs will be available in the future, after enough people are trained to produce them.

There are technical difficulties. The signal is frequently interrupted. Programming might be interrupted for long periods during repair. An irritating interrupted signal causes the picture to flash on and off the screen. It is hard on the eyes.

Channels are scrambled. For example, what you know as channel 56 has been assigned to channel 21 on the cable converter. When the system is upgraded to 52 channels, all channels will be re-assigned. A card is the only way to decode the system. It is easily misplaced.

I inquired about the potential 52-channel capacity. A company spokesman would not say what will be available. "I don't want to let the cat out of the bag," he said.

No matter. The cat is supposedly out of the bag for the first 36 channels, and I still don't know what is on many.

I once thought cable TV is in its infancy. Someone else said it must be in its embryonic stage. That's probably more accurate.

Pipe dreams. I should say!



Lynn Orr

## Fear stalks the suburbs

Fear is often a simple story. Terry, 18, of Redford Township, and his girlfriend walked into a Grand River party store the weekend after Thanksgiving last year. Terry picked up a can of soda pop, paid for it and went to leave. The door was locked.

He asked the clerk to unlock the door. The clerk asked him to step into the back room. Terry did, only to discover another clerk, a 19-year-old from Southfield, brandishing a revolver.

The two clerks accused Terry of breaking into the store a few days earlier.

Terry denied the accusation and tried to leave. The other clerk had picked up a baseball bat and was holding Terry's girlfriend.

All Terry could think about was the fact that two teenagers had been found beaten to death on Thanksgiving Day less than a mile from the store.

HE TRIED to reason with the clerks and finally asked to talk to the owner. The clerks called him and Terry again denied the accusation over the phone to the owner.

The clerks finally allowed Terry and his girlfriend to leave. To this day, Terry is convinced that the presence of two kids out in the parking lot were his only protection from some kind of assault.

With the encouragement of his mother, Terry decided to go to the Redford police with his story. As he tells it, the police discouraged him from pressing charges. "You don't want some kid to have that kind of thing on his record," the officer said about the possible prosecution of the store clerk.

When Terry relayed the officer's lack of interest to his mother, she was angry and accompanied Terry to the police station for a second visit.

This time, police agreed to seek a warrant. Last week, the 19-year-old clerk pleaded *nolo contendere* (no contest) to a misdemeanor charge of pointing a firearm without malice.

District Court Judge Robert Brang accepted the plea on the condition that the clerk would not enter the store before 1982 and that the charge could be dismissed at the end of one year, if no other cases were pending.

Terry never had a chance to testify in court about the incident — or the fear he had that day in the store.

But he remembers it.

THE CLERK, who believed Terry was somehow involved in an earlier break-in, may not know what he did wrong.

The clerk, like many others, perhaps, didn't believe the police could protect his store from robbery. Perhaps someone has confronted him with a gun before.

Chaldean clerks and storeowners, many new to the suburbs, tend to be very independent and want to use their own resources rather than rely on police for protection.

Storeowners work in fear that they will be killed in a robbery. They keep guns in the store, legally, for their own protection, just as homeowners who once left their doors unlocked now use burglar alarms and double locks to try to keep out intruders.

But nothing keeps out the fear.

The statistics are alarming.

Burglaries, larcenies, robberies — crime is accelerating in the suburbs. Last year, serious crime rose 11 percent in Redford Township and Southfield.

Robberies increased 8 percent in Canton Township. Home burglaries jumped 20 percent in Livonia, 49 percent in Farmington Hills and an amazing 88 percent in Southfield.

The human statistics are less tidy but not invisible — crowded court dockets and crowded prisons, testimony to the walking wounded. Grieving families and friends of the victims who aren't alive to tell their stories.

And a gray veil of fear to match the winter landscape. This kind of fear is scary, because it induces irrational actions and tragedy.

Once suburbanites thought they had escaped inner city crime by moving to the suburbs. We've since discovered that crime cannot be contained in geographical boundaries.

The economy dips, crime soars. There's nothing new about the cycle.

But with no escape in sight, perhaps it's time to look deeper at the source.

# Riegle rolls up his sleeves to battle the 'new wave'

No one ever promised Donald Riegle Jr. a rose garden, but Michigan's born again Democratic senator is beginning to feel like he's being ganged up on.

If only he hadn't changed parties back in 1973, he'd be part of the majority now, not the Moral Majority, the Senate majority.

But that's all water under the bridge, anyhow. With the Senate roster reading 53 Republicans to 47 Democrats, Riegle is like a sailor on a ship with a new captain.

It's one thing being in the minority, but it's quite another being on a hit list. It's the Moral Majority, those upright people with all the questions as well as the answers, who are picking on him.

Riegle says he doesn't like making their hit list a bit.

"I see great dangers in their definitions," he told about 150 persons at Congregation B'nai David recently. One of the senator's nine Michigan offices is in Southfield, so the talk at the synagogue was home ground for him.

"The Moral Majority is about religious intolerance — that's against what the United States is all about," he told the audience.

Riegle said his Moral Majority report card gave him a zero. What's more, Father Robert Drinan, a

longtime liberal member of Congress, also got a zero.

**BUT RICHARD KELLY** of Abscam fame, who was convicted for taking thousands of dollars and videotaped doing it, got 100 percent, Riegle said.

"And Congressman Robert Bowman, indicted for soliciting minors, got good grades from them also. We have to take a good look at the yardsticks being used."

Riegle charges that Moral Majority people are extremely well organized and well funded. He said his 1976 campaign cost \$900,000, but the one to win back his seat in 1982 will cost upwards of \$2 million. The problem is where to get that kind of funding.

A member of Congress since he was 28, the Flint native was graduated from the University of Michigan, got a master's of business administration at Michigan State and did doctoral work at Harvard.

In the Senate, he's on committees that deal with human resources and budget. "Reagan's first statement that the budget will be balanced in 1982 now have been shifted to 1984," he said.

One of Riegle's chief concerns is defense spending, which he is prepared to do. "What I'm not prepared to do is sign any blank check for exotic weap-



Shirlee Linden

on systems."

"WE HAVE 9,000 nuclear war heads — bombs so destructive that it's inconceivable what they do when they go off.

"We can blow the world up any number of times over and have lots of ammunition left. But we don't have helicopters capable of landing in Iran to rescue American hostages. We need basic nuts and bolts weapons."

And, the senator said we provide disaster relief for nature's hurricanes, but not for "economic hurricanes."

Riegle contends we need import limitations for a time and points out that other industrialized countries limit Japanese imports.

"Recent editorials say don't jeopardize free trade. I have a Detroit auto dealer who wants to operate a dealership in Tokyo — but Ambassador Mike Mans-

field says it's not possible," he said. "What free trade?"

Riegle doesn't like the U.S. being second in auto production any more than he likes being in the Senate minority.

"But we're second place, and those are the new realities," he said. "The Japanese will send 2.2 million cars here this year and will take back 20,000. And we're sending billions out of the country for oil."

AS LONG as our economic problems are not addressed, Riegle doesn't believe we can expect to exert world leadership.

Michigan's future looks very dark to him as the Reagan cutbacks are put on the table.

"If the cuts are implemented, the state's problems will get worst fast," he says. "I'm worried about the assault on our domestic economic problems."

In 1982, 32 Senate seats will be up for election, including the one held by Riegle. Twenty-two of them are held by Democrats, a situation the senator called "tough."

For a quarter of a century, the Democrats controlled the Senate, but now, Riegle says, they have little practical chance to regain control in the foreseeable future.