

FEAR & LOAFING

STREET SENSE

Cable manners



Karl Nilsson

If you thought the delay of the baseball season was big news, listen to this flash: The end of the world has just been postponed.

With the recent thaw on the Cold War, the International Coalition of Atomic Scientists and Beer Tasters A-Go-Go has moved the hands of the official Dooomsday Clock backwards from 11:56 p.m. to 11:59 p.m.

Now that we're 10 reassuring minutes away from Armageddon, nuclear annihilation has been replaced as the "Most Disruptive Household Event" by a new threat. Of course, the awful event I'm talking about is free Cable Movie Preview Week.

Granted there was a time back in my college days when staring at a scrambled TV signal would have been considered entertaining. But lately, seeing the jumbled patterns makes me insatiably curious: What important cultural event am I missing? A triumph of the human spirit? A breakthrough in cognitive science? Frontal nudity?

The concept behind preview week is simple: Twice a year the cable channels unscramble its premium channels and lets non-subscribers sample a typical week of programming. (To call this jumbled-up schedule as "typical" is like calling Donald Trump an "average wage earner.") The teaser lineup is stacked with ringers like Tom Cruise and Bette Midler. The actual schedule is more likely to feature three hours of Yoko Ono bleating like a goat.)

THEORETICALLY, once you see what you've been missing by wasting time reading, conversing and stepping, you'll dash to the phone and sign up but quick!

To further encourage you, the television's host (handpicked for his asphyxiophilia) gently explains the hazards of going out to the movies: "Suppose someone wires explosives to your ignition switch! Is the big screen ambience worth being vaporized by a pipe bomb? Is the smolder of popcorn worth being cremated alive in a cigarette head-on crash with a tanker truck?"

"Remember, with cable you stay safely locked in your own home. Not to sound negative, but the theatre is just the kind of

place where your car could be stolen, your purse could be snatched, and you could be pushed through a plate glass window—all in one night! Worse yet, you might have to use the public restroom.

"According to our research, the average visit to the cinema goes something like this: First, you stand in pouring rain. Next, you find a seat—directly in front of three fun-loving psychopaths hiding from a police manhunt. Crazy number one swaps shoes with your wife. Number two kicks your seat in time with the music. Number three fires his pistol into the air whenever someone on screen mentions Niagara Falls.

"You lean back just long enough to attract head line when, suddenly, hunger strikes. Stumbling to the concession stand, you shell out \$7.50 for stale Milk Duds. When you return, the Detroit Pistons' starting lineup is sitting in front of you.

"ARRIVING HOME, exhausted and broke, you discover your babysitter and Daniel Ortega, clad only in moon boots and lobster bibs, dancing fairly authentic lambada on the coffee table.

"Call now to avoid this needless tragedy. After all, would you rather be glued to the tube or glued to the sticky floor of a theater?"

How was this persuasive telenote technique perfected? A group of 40 adults who use silverware was asked to view a movie channel preview week under laboratory conditions. The transition from couch potato to brain dead was carefully monitored.

The results were conclusive: After five nights of watching Howlingly Funny Big Name Movie Greats, a viewer's brain undergoes a series of unexplained contractions until it finally shrinks to the size of a cough drop. At this point, they are unable to pinpoint their current address beyond which planet they live on.

All of which makes them the perfect candidates for a costly upgrade to a premium channel. The only problem is they can no longer dial the toll-free number.

Smoking: Individual vs. society

Dear Barbara, I am sick of hearing all of the negative brainwashing for cigarettes. Is there anyone on this planet who doesn't know that cigarettes are harmful. So, enough already.

If you haven't already guessed, I am a smoker. I assume I will quit someday, but I am not ready to quit now. I wish the rest of the world would leave me be.

Who pays for all the propaganda now? I sure hope that I am not paying for it indirectly. That would enrage me even more.

Not Yet Able to Quit

Dear Not Yet Able to Quit, The issue that you raise is important in every community. It is that of the individual versus society. As with many issues, it is a true dilemma. That is, there is no real answer to it. Both sides have valid positions. Since the advent of aggressive anti-smoking campaigns, many individuals have stated sentiments like yours. David Newman, the WXYT morning show host, recently complained of feeling harassed by anti-smoking messages.

Nickie McWhirter in a recent column said "unwanted health advice makes me sick." She quoted author/journalist Fran Liebowitz as saying, "Smoking is the whole reason for being grown up."

All of you have a point. The issue is not as clear as it seems to be to the anti-smoking brigade.

The issue of suicide can be compared. In many religions, suicide is considered to be a sin and the bodies are buried separate from others. Possible suicides are hospitalized so as to be protected from themselves. On the other hand, suicide in Asian cultures was, and may still be, considered an honorable way to die. In Asian cultures, smoking is not considered a social evil, but is accepted



Barbara Schiff

as a person's individual choice. The other side of this issue is the societal view. Smoking costs each

taxpayer \$221 a year. That is, both non-smokers and smokers are paying for the illness, absenteeism and loss of productivity caused by smoking.

Your smoking habit has been at least partially influenced by the positive "brainwashing" that the cigarette companies have promulgated. Negative persuasion is needed merely to counteract it. Your taxes are paying for this through the Michigan Department of Health.

As a "bleeding heart," I hope you will decide to quit "for your own good." But there are many individuals that would opt for you to live your life as you see fit.

Barbara

If you have a question or a comment for Barbara Schiff, a trained therapist and experienced counselor, to Street Sense, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

Private eyes: They're watching you

Continued from Page 1

network in hopes of finding missing people — to which Kearns boasts an 80 percent success rate.

Sometimes the simplest methods of gathering information is best, though. Like the time Kearns and one of his agents sat next to two undetected corporate thieves in a restaurant, and overheard their plans to bilk their company out of thousands of dollars.

STILL, COMPUTERS are a large part of the business.

The connection to worldwide sources is touted in Kearns' advertising brochure, along with The Phoenix Group's affiliation to former national intelligence (CIA) officers and various local and state law enforcement sources.

All this sounds impressive and adds to the image that "we're not the ordinary investigative agency," said Kearns.

"We're unique," he said. "We handle exotic people with wierder problems."

Then perhaps it shouldn't be a surprise to learn the group handles terrorist complaints, as the brochure claims. "Not necessarily Germans or Arabs in ski masks," Kearns explained. "But more like employees who have been fired who call up and say 'I'm going to beat your ass.'"

He gets two or three such terrorist jobs a year.

However, Kearns reaps more employment from corporate takeover attempts.

Four years ago Kearns and a surveillance expert from Washington, D.C., practically lived in two buildings owned by a Detroit corporation, trying to sniff out bugs and taps theoretically planted by takeover gurus.

The investigators checked the company's private files and covered every surface of headquarters with approximately \$70,000 in surveillance detection equipment.

In the end, nothing was found, "although I got more gray hairs on that assignment than any other," said Kearns, who netted approximately \$30,000 for the job.

OF KEARNS' Yellow Pages ad saying "rooms and telephones checked for bugs and taps," he is careful to point out the word checked. The ad draws at least 10 calls a week, but by people wanting Kearns to implement taps, not detect them.

Bugging and wiretapping have been felonies since 1968 and are punishable by up to 10 years in jail. Any detectives caught in the act would assuredly lose their licenses, Kearns said.

"Even attorneys are afraid that I can't do it," he said. "No one could

While Kearns conducts much of his research by leafing through phone books and directories, a computer sitting amid piles of paper on his desk is his most invaluable tool. That's how he tracked down the three missing children.

pay me enough money to take that risk."

Other calls he prefers not to get are requests from men — and there have been a number — who want women's underwear tested for sperm — presumably not theirs. "I have the labs that will do it, but I don't like to do that sort of thing," he said.

Still, the domestic scene does provide its fair share of job opportunities. Kearns is frequently asked to do work in child custody cases, by perhaps following a parent's comings and goings for evidence that he or she may be unfit.

Don Cherry is Mr. Hockey

Continued from Page 1

dian cable, he's featured in a Nike commercial, talks hockey Tuesday mornings on WLLZ-FM and writes a column in the Warren-based "Sports Fan's Journal."

And yeah, he owns a restaurant where the food is good, if you don't mind watching videos of Bob Probert busting someone's face on TV while eating. Service is quicker than Stevie Nicksman on a breakaway.

THE WALLS are decorated with countless hockey photos and memorabilia. Some patrons walk around in Maple Leaf jerseys, making one wonder if he should stand and whistle "O Canada" before eating.

OK, so where's "Grapest"? Three hours later, we spot the cult hero of hockey fans sitting at a table with a pitcher of beer. We move in to fore-check.

A group ushers Cherry over to take his photo. He poses with his thumb up while we hold the flash. More people line up to get his autograph.

Although in his 50s, Cherry adroitly weaves through traffic, ducks around the corner and appears to be home free.

Suddenly, he pulls up short.

"Excuse me," he said, veering off to the downstairs restroom.

Cherry re-emerges. He ushers us through the kitchen to an office. "I've got to fix that picture on the screen and gotta clean up that bathroom," he said, sitting down at the table. "I put out fires wherever I go."

Heard from Grapevine

Continued from Page 1

like (Russ) Courtnall have grown a fool."

European influence on the NHL. "It shows they're (NHL) progressive. You don't have them for hitting, do you? You don't have them for fighting, do you? You have them to keep the game going. You know how many Europeans are in the top 20 scoring? One, (Edmonton Oiler Jar) Kurri. So what do you have them for?"

Five best fighters in the NHL:

"Probert, no doubt, when he's back. (Joey) Kocur right behind. There's a lot of good ones. (Jany) Miller's got to be up there and so does (Sean) Cronin. The Barbarian (Ewen) is pretty good, too. I could go on and on. There's plenty of good ones out there."

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Continued from Page 1

brates the strength of human courage and includes so many talented performances doesn't hurt its chances either.

THAT BRINGS US to the top two, "Dead Poet's Society" with four nominations and "Driving Miss Daisy," leading the field with nine. All those nominations may be a clue to academy members' thinking. What other factors are at play here?

Both films were out of the mainstream in subject and production background. Both were unexpected successes at the box office. Analyzing the nominations (they received shows how well regarded they were by the academy. All four "Dead Poet's Society" nominations were in major categories, while "Driving Miss Daisy" received five major and four minor nominations.

Both were nominated for best pic-

ture and screenplay — original for "Dead Poet's Society" and adapted for "Driving Miss Daisy." The latter also received nominations for best actress and supporting actor, while the former got the nod for best director. All in all, they're pretty even in the major categories.

The four minor nominations "Driving Miss Daisy" received — art direction, makeup, costume design and film editing — particularly the first three, are significant.

BUT THERE'S MORE to number one than how it looks. How does the winner make people feel? Winning films are upbeat in the sense that they leave audiences enriched with positive feelings.

As a matter of fact, both "Dead Poet's Society" and "Driving Miss Daisy" were successful because they avoided the mundane, drippy and obvious and celebrated the very best of human courage, tenacity and that

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		Ringside Ends (Rows 1-9)	\$4.75	
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Evening	Sunday, March 25, 1990	Reserved (Rows 10-18)	\$6.00	\$4.20
		Ringside Ends (Rows 1-9)	\$4.75	
7:30 P.M.	Wednesday, March 21, 1990	Ringside (Rows 1-9)	\$6.00	\$4.20
Evening	Thursday, March 22, 1990	Reserved (Rows 10-18)	\$5.00	\$3.50
	Wednesday, March 28, 1990	Ringside Ends (Rows 1-9)	\$4.45	
1:30 P.M.	Sunday, April 1, 1990	Ringside (Rows 1-9)	\$7.00	\$4.95
Afternoon		Reserved (Rows 10-18)	\$6.00	\$4.20
		Ringside Ends (Rows 1-9)	\$4.75	

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