

# Channel 50 gets into news business

By CARL STODDARD

Bill Kennedy, Channel 50's bartened king of daytime movies, has established a comfortable niche for the Southfield station.



BILL KENNEDY

tough Detroit area television market. Now Channel 50 is beginning a gambit that will take it out of its own corner and closer to head-on competition with the big three Detroit stations.

Beginning April 10, the station is launching twice-daily newscasts. The programs won't be carbon copies of those on channels 2, 4 and 7. Nor will Channel 50's coverage even compete directly with the big three.

Instead, the shows are slated for 2:35 p.m. following Hollywood hero Bill Kennedy and again at 9:55 p.m. after the evening movies.

Each newscast will be five minutes long and will be devoted to local news. The prime-time shows will be anchored by Byron MacGregor, executive producer and a news anchor at WWJ radio. Channel 50's news and public affairs manager, Amyre Makupson, will anchor the afternoon news.

"IT'S SOMETHING we've wanted to do for a long time," said promotion manager Ruth Whitmore of Farmington Hills.

"We don't have the money to throw into creating an image. We're just trying to build a solid station. And part of being solid is news. It's a body builder."

This isn't the first time Channel 50 has tried to enter the hard-core



BRYON MACGREGOR

arena of TV news. In 1968, the station launched an hour-long newscast in the 10 p.m. timeslot with newscasters Ken Thomas and Woody Willis. The show folded in a year.

This time, the station plans to start small and gauge the reaction before deciding to expand. Much of the suc-

cess for the program will rest with MacGregor and Ms. Makupson, both of whom will be asked to make do without the extensive newsgathering teams assembled at the other Detroit stations.

MacGregor, a West Bloomfield resident, has been a Detroit area newsmen since 1967 when he joined CKLW radio's news team. There, he garnered a number of awards, including a national award for coverage of the Port Huron tunnel disaster in 1971.

In 1974, MacGregor recorded a multi-million selling record "The Americans," a narrative set to music citing accomplishments of the American Red Cross abroad. He donated the royalties, which exceeded \$100,000, to the American Red Cross.

MS. MAKUPSON, a Detroit native, delivered the first newscast for the country's first all-black television station, WOPR, in 1975. Before that, she worked in TV news departments in Nashville and Washington, D.C. She joined Channel 50 last fall as news and public affairs manager, and hosts a daily talk show "Detroit Today" on the station.

Channel 50 came on the air in 1965 and devoted most of its air time to sports. "I think we televised every sporting event in the country," joked Ms. Whitmore.

But the sports programs made money for the station and it found itself able to expand its offerings. Much of that money went to buy or lease movies.

"That's when they discovered there was such a thing as film classics," Ms. Whitmore recalled. "Until then, the networks were of the opinion movies had to be new."

In 1969, Channel 50 enticed Bill Kennedy away from Channel 9 and started in earnest down the road to become Detroit's movie station. Today, Kennedy commands a loyal following weekdays. His Sunday afternoon movie claims nearly half of all viewers in the Detroit area.

Reunions of network television shows, such as "I Love Lucy" and "Emergency," also have helped shore up ratings. Channel 50 now claims to be number one among kiddie viewers and is second only to Channel 7 with the lucrative audience of women 18-49.

SOME OF IT'S reruns have even out-distanced local news programs in the early evening ratings race. Some of the stations Channel 50 has hosted, now get a chance to offer tit for tat when the station wades into the news business. But the prospect of a ratings defeat doesn't seem to bother anyone at the station.

"We're always trying to better our



AMYRE MAKUPSON

offerings," said program director David Simons of West Bloomfield.

Channel 50 now broadcasts the "Barry Farber Show," a replacement for the late Lou Gordon on Sunday nights. The program is easily beaten by the network stations, but Channel 50 has doggedly maintained the program as part of its commitment to public service broadcasting. The news programs will be an extension of that commitment, station personnel say.

No matter what the ratings of the news shows may be, Channel 50 seems certain to at least maintain a solid spot in the Detroit area.

## Southfield teens in May 12 pageant

Several Southfield teenagers have been chosen to participate in the 1978 Michigan National Teen-Ager Pageant to be held at Eastern Michigan University the weekend of May 12.

More than 100 participants and their parents attended an orientation luncheon and get-acquainted party recently along with the present state champion, Cherie Hubbard of Milford.

State finalists are selected on the basis of scholastic records, community involvement, school or church activities, poise, personality and appearance.

Included as finalists this year were Leslie Ann Sabo, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Sabo; Jody Shafer, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Shafer; and Pamela Fields, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur H. Fields, all of Southfield.

The winner of the state competition will receive a \$500 cash scholarship, a Barizon modeling scholarship and a trip to Atlanta to compete in the Miss National Teen-Ager pageant in August.

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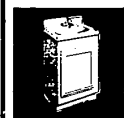
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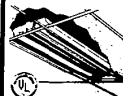
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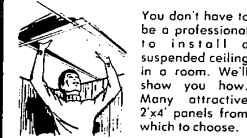
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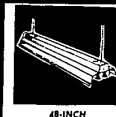
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