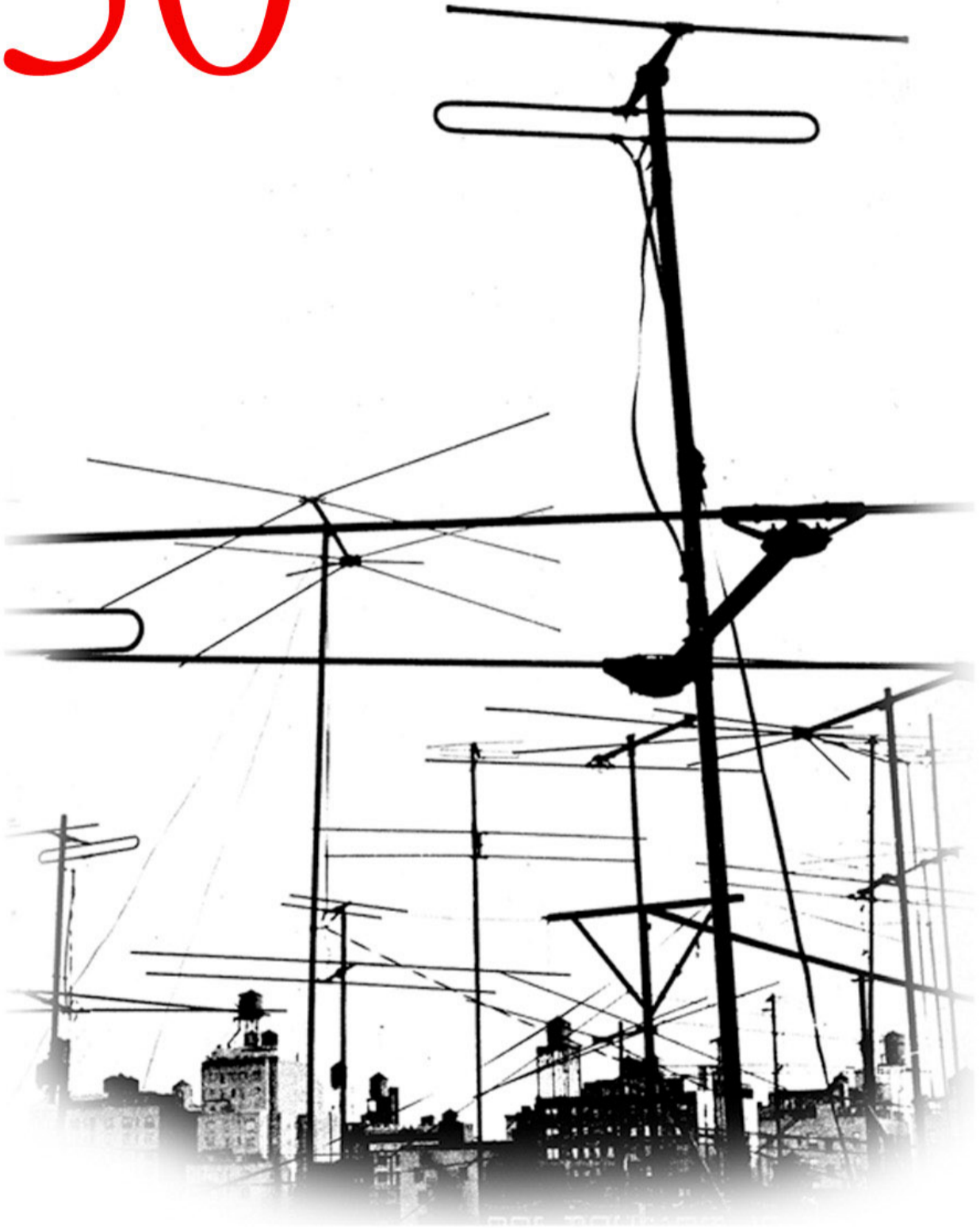


30 Years of TV



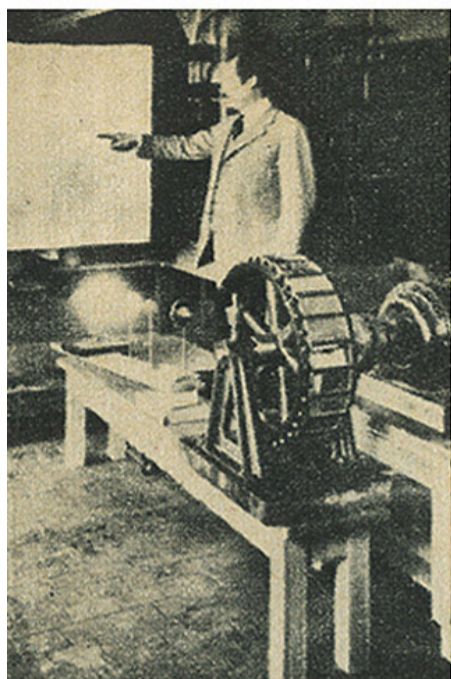
Coronet

Endless Variety in Stories and Pictures

February, 1954

p. 43

OldMagazineArticles.com



1920's: GE's Alexanderson, RCA's Zworykin, and C. Francis Jenkins—pioneers.

IN TERMS OF PUBLIC MISCONCEPTION the notion that television is an invention of post-World War II years is in a class by itself. The truth is, long before Uncle Miltie was old enough to have any nephews—as early as April 8, 1927—the New

York *Times* carried a front-page headline: “Like a Photo Come To Life; Hoover’s Face Plainly Imaged Here As He Speaks in Washington.”

This triumph of science proved, once and for all, that television was within the realm of probability. It



1928: George White's chorines were tested to see which registered best on TV.

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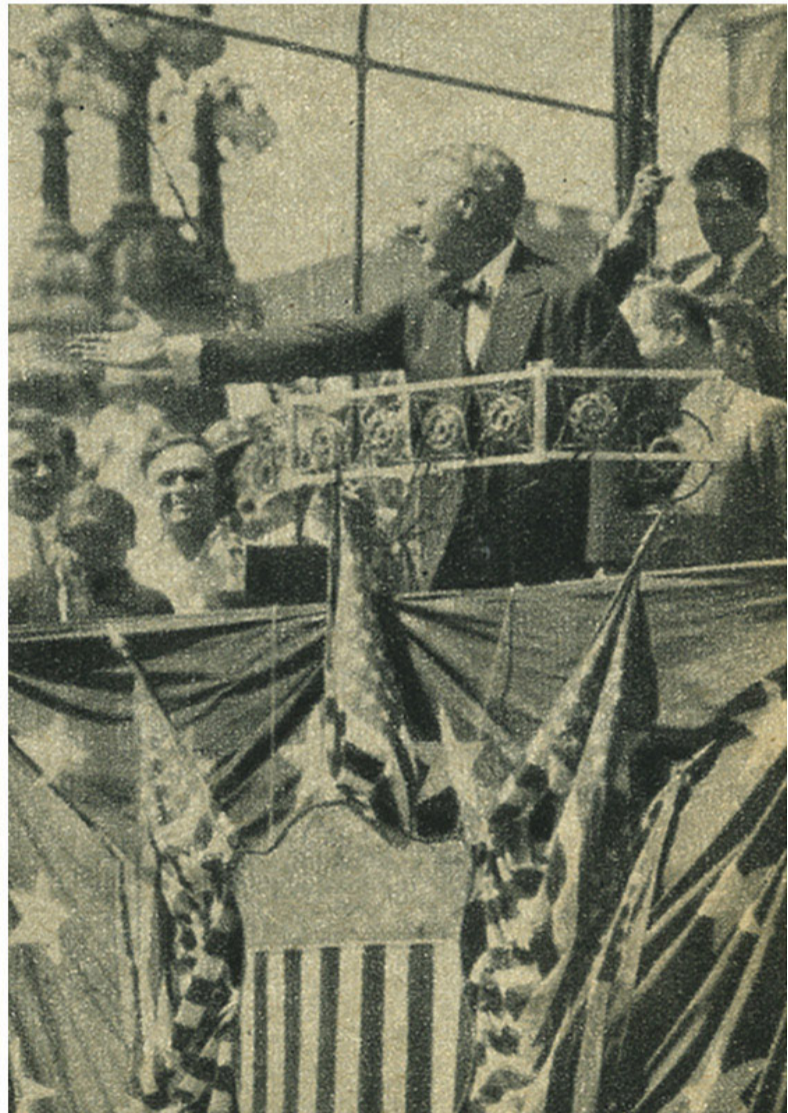
1928: Mort Stewart directed TV's first play, *The Queen's Messenger*, from Schenectady.



paved the way for Godfrey, Berle and a host of other luminaries.

Countless scientists contributed to the phenomenon. Marconi gets credit, as do Farnsworth and Lee De Forest. But the real starting line was strung by an RCA scientist named Vladimir K. Zworykin in 1923, when he applied for a patent on an iconoscope—a TV eye which converted a scene into a stream of electronic impulses for transmission to a kinescope receiver, which reproduced the scene on its glowing screen.

Not until 1939 was this all-electronic system ready for public use. Meanwhile, some notable firsts were rung up with more primitive mechanical scanning equipment: General Electric presented a one-act play; a woman, televised in London, was seen on a receiver in



1928: Al Smith was televised in Albany.

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1930: Songstress de Leath and chimp.

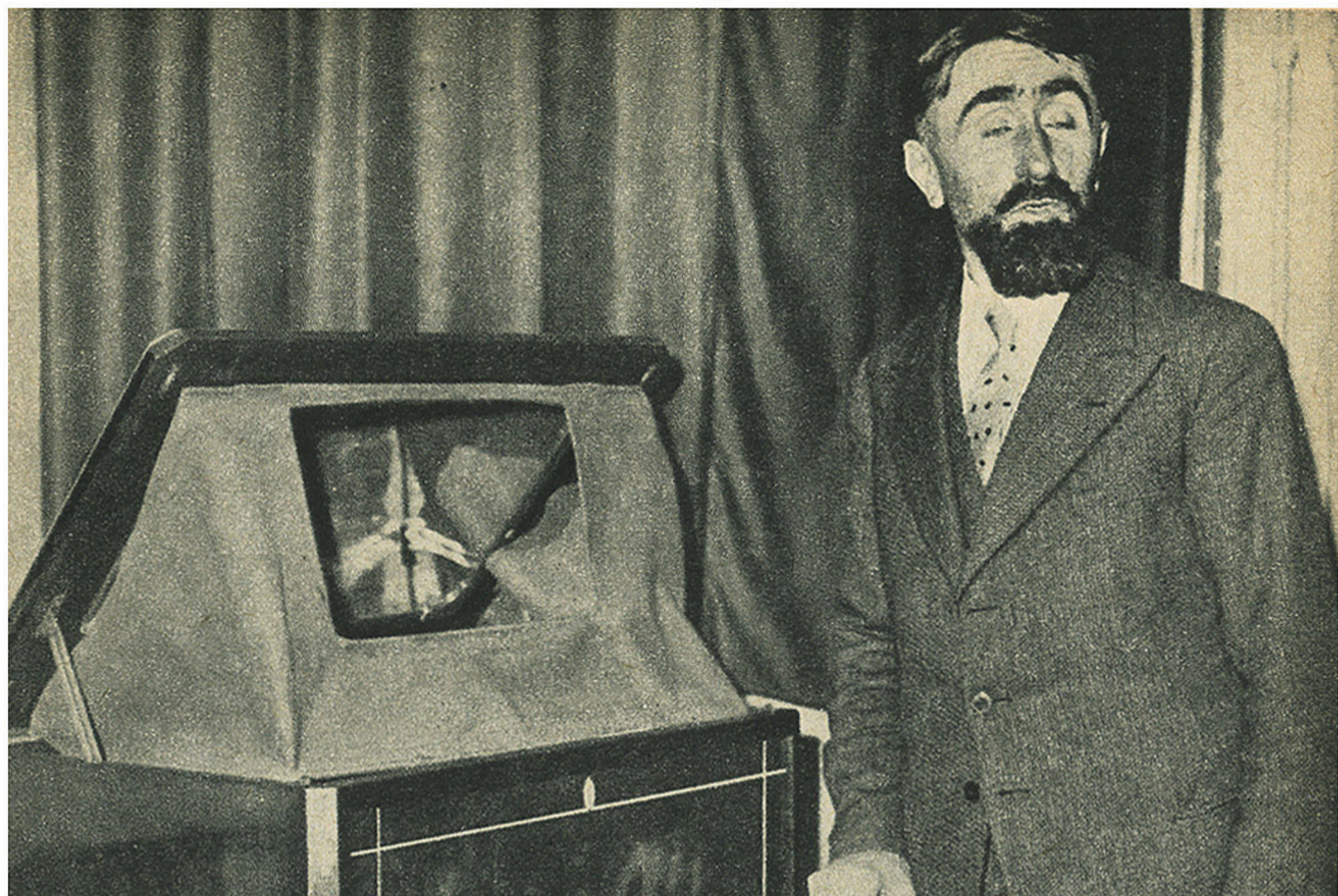
Hartsdale, New York; Station WRNY, New York, inaugurated daily telecasts. And all this during the days when a Model A Ford was the snappiest car on the road.

In 1926, *Variety*, the Bible of Show Business, predicted that "Radio artists may be seen and heard in television." Five years later, Chicago boasted 1,000 receivers and sporadic telecasts. Once, in a burst of exuberance, Station W9XAO promised a series of boxing matches. But the gladiators moved too quickly for the scanning disk. The project was quietly dropped.

In New York, RCA projected six-foot images on the screen at Proctor's Theater. Later, the first coaxial cable—copper tubes the size of a fountain pen permitting wide-frequency bands to be sent long



1932: The first images had to be separately synchronized with the voices.



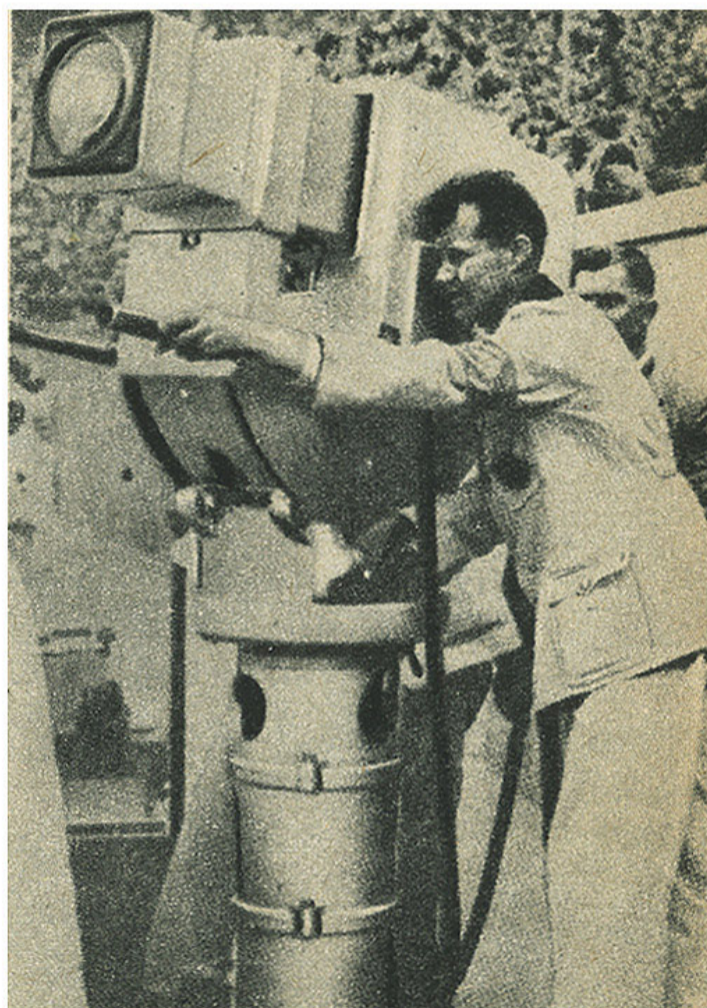
1935: M. Barthelemy developed the first television receiving screen in France.

distances—was laid between New York and Philadelphia.

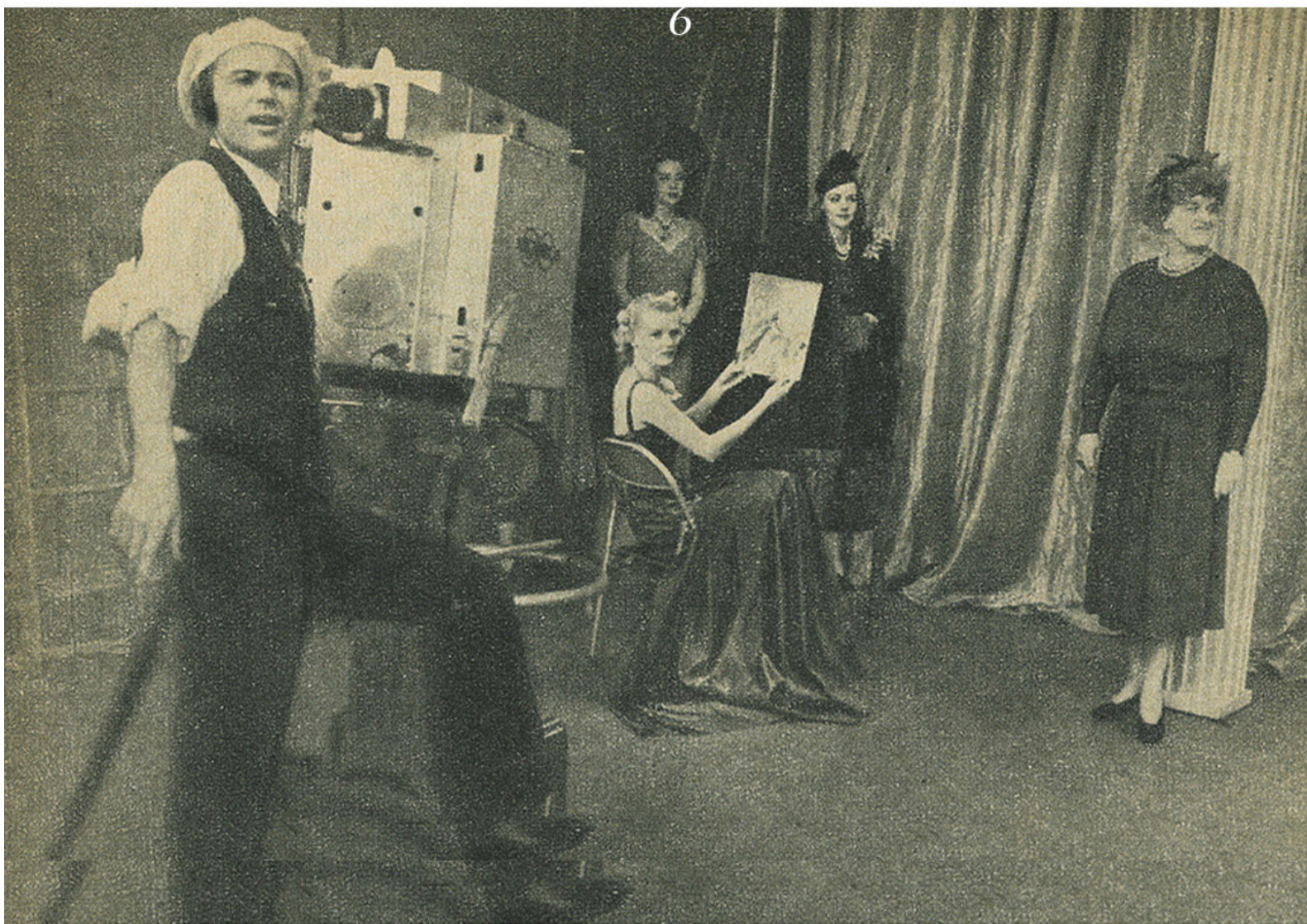
In 1931, CBS inaugurated an experimental TV series with fanfare. Mayor Jimmy Walker opened the station and Kate Smith sang *When the Moon Comes Over the Mountain*. In the year that followed, CBS offered dance lessons, music, comedy and a mystery entitled, *The Television Ghost*, whose ghostliness was frequently enhanced by electronic flickers and flutters that had never been written into the script.

Across the sea, the English Derby was televised, as were King George VI and his Queen, their images being sent over 7,500 square miles to delight 50,000 Britons with close views of the sovereigns.

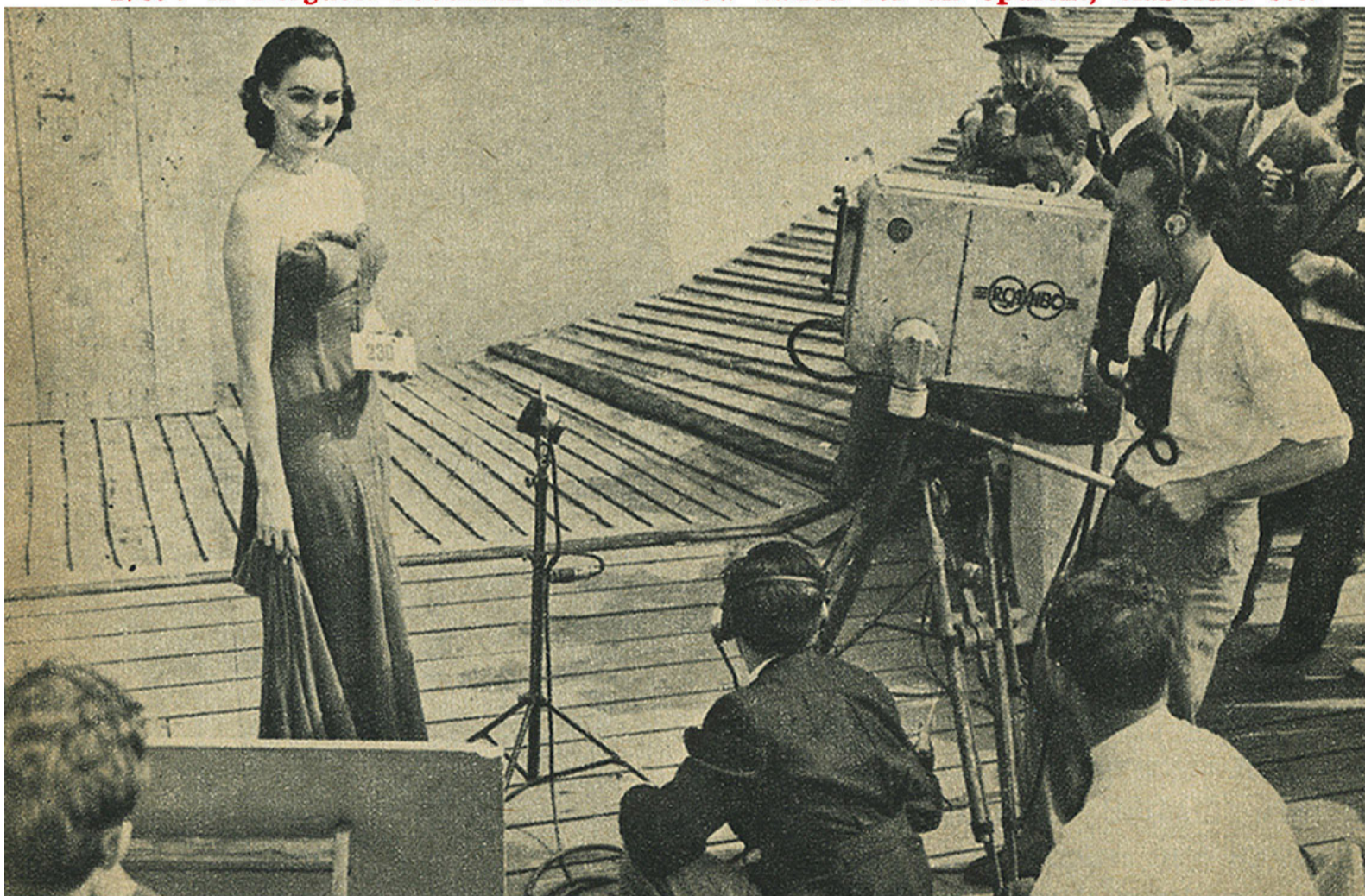
Meanwhile, the glowing promises and pronouncements—a TV set beside every radio—continued una-



1936: TV followed the Berlin Olympics



1939: A Bergdorf-Goodman fashion show called for an opulent, elaborate set.

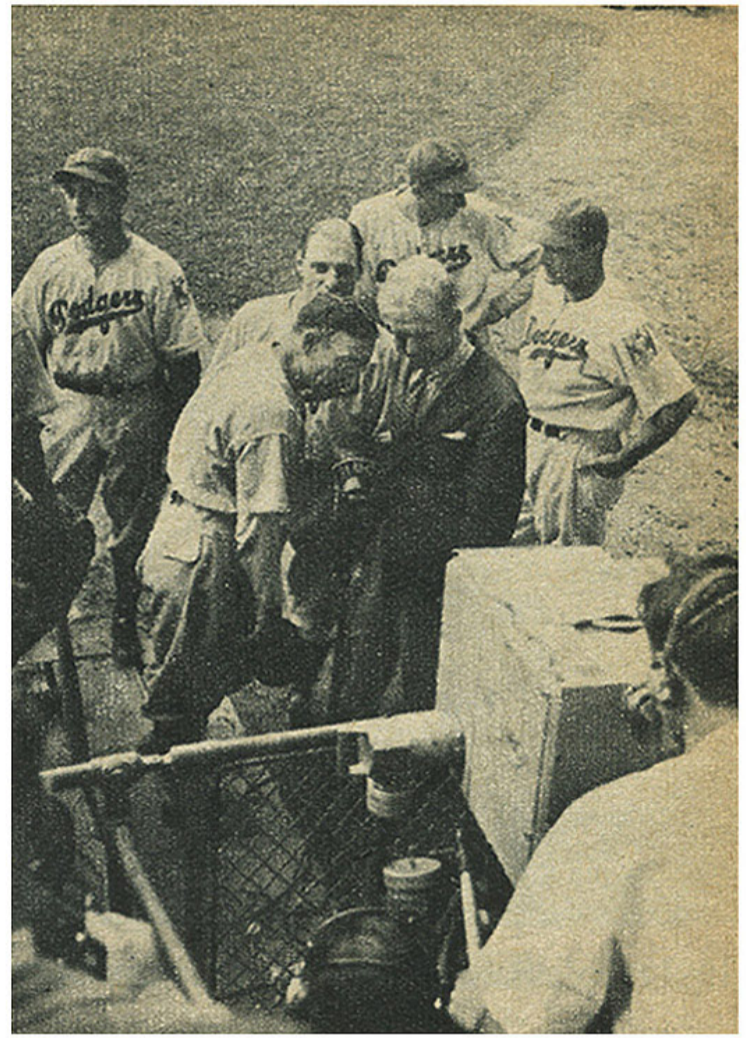


1939: A logical step in television's history—the choice of a Miss TV.

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1939: Imogene Coca without Sid Caesar.



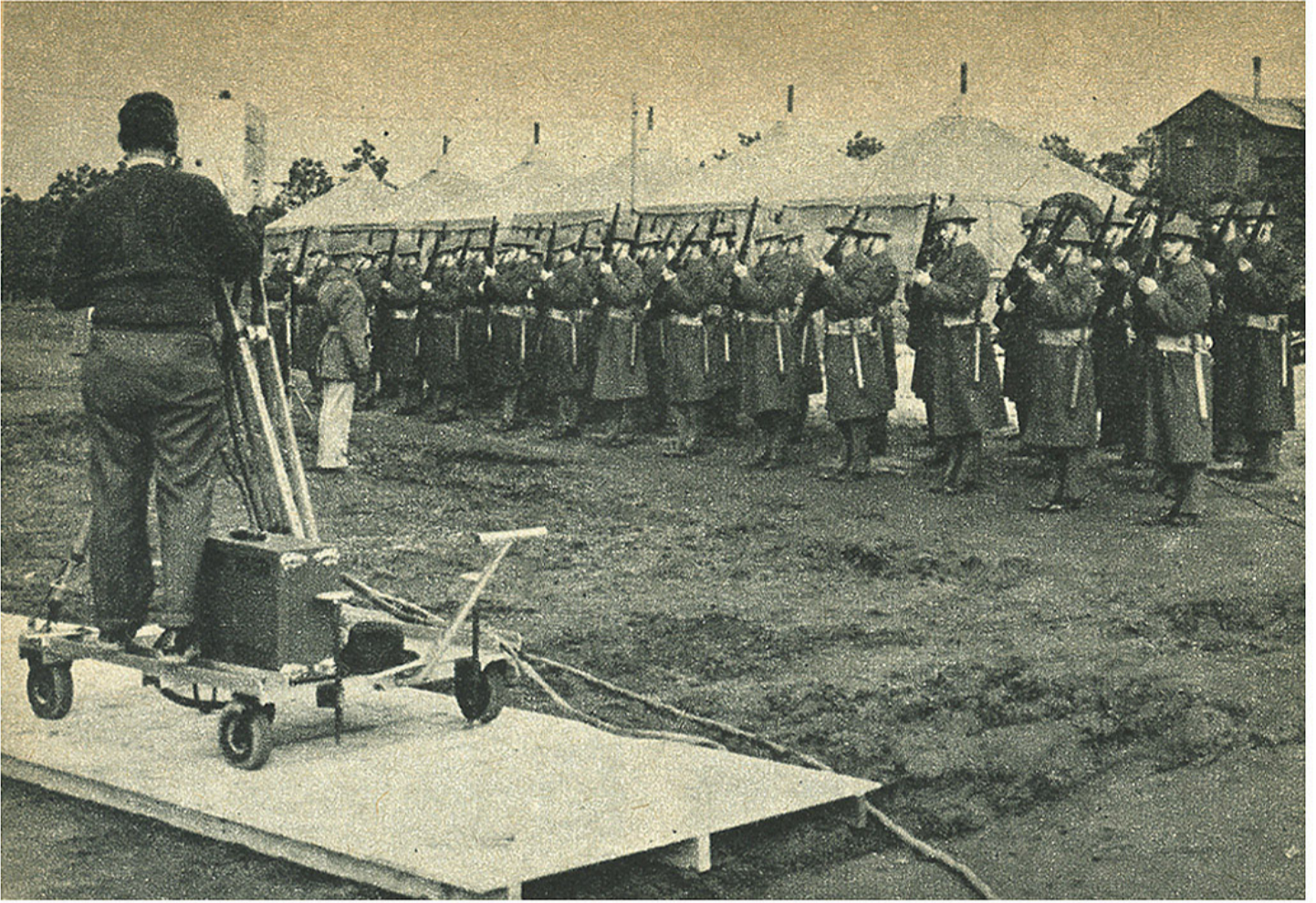
1939: First major-league game televised.

bated. The public could only wait, and eventually conclude that if television was indeed just around the corner, it must be around the same corner as Prosperity.

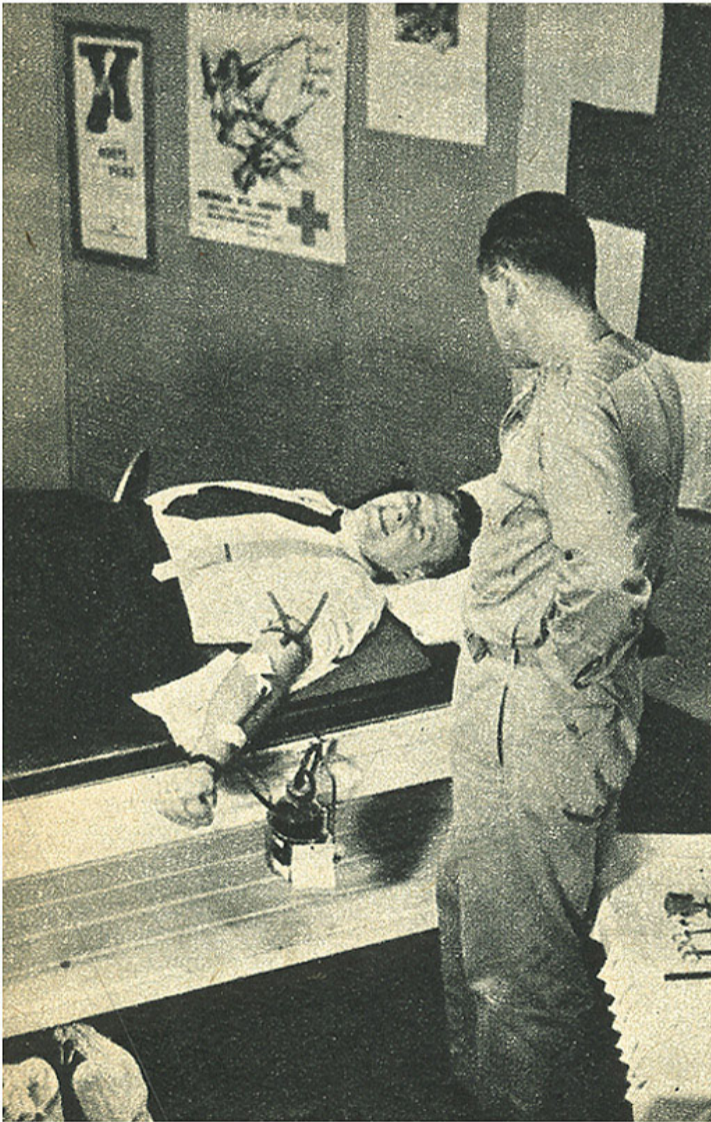
By 1938, a few enterprising companies—Andrea, GE, Du Mont—had sold some 5,000 receivers and assemble-at-home kits, but throughout most of that time-marking year, their proud owners had nothing to look at but the opaque screen of the kinescope and the mahogany cabinet. In England, a vast audience “saw” Prime Minister Chamberlain return from Munich with “peace for our time.” With the opening of the New York World’s Fair in 1939, Franklin D. Roosevelt became the first American President to be televised as NBC inaugurated regularly scheduled programming. Simultaneous-



1939: TV watched FDR open the Fair.



1941: Television cameras at Camp Upton, N. Y., recorded the induction of draftees.



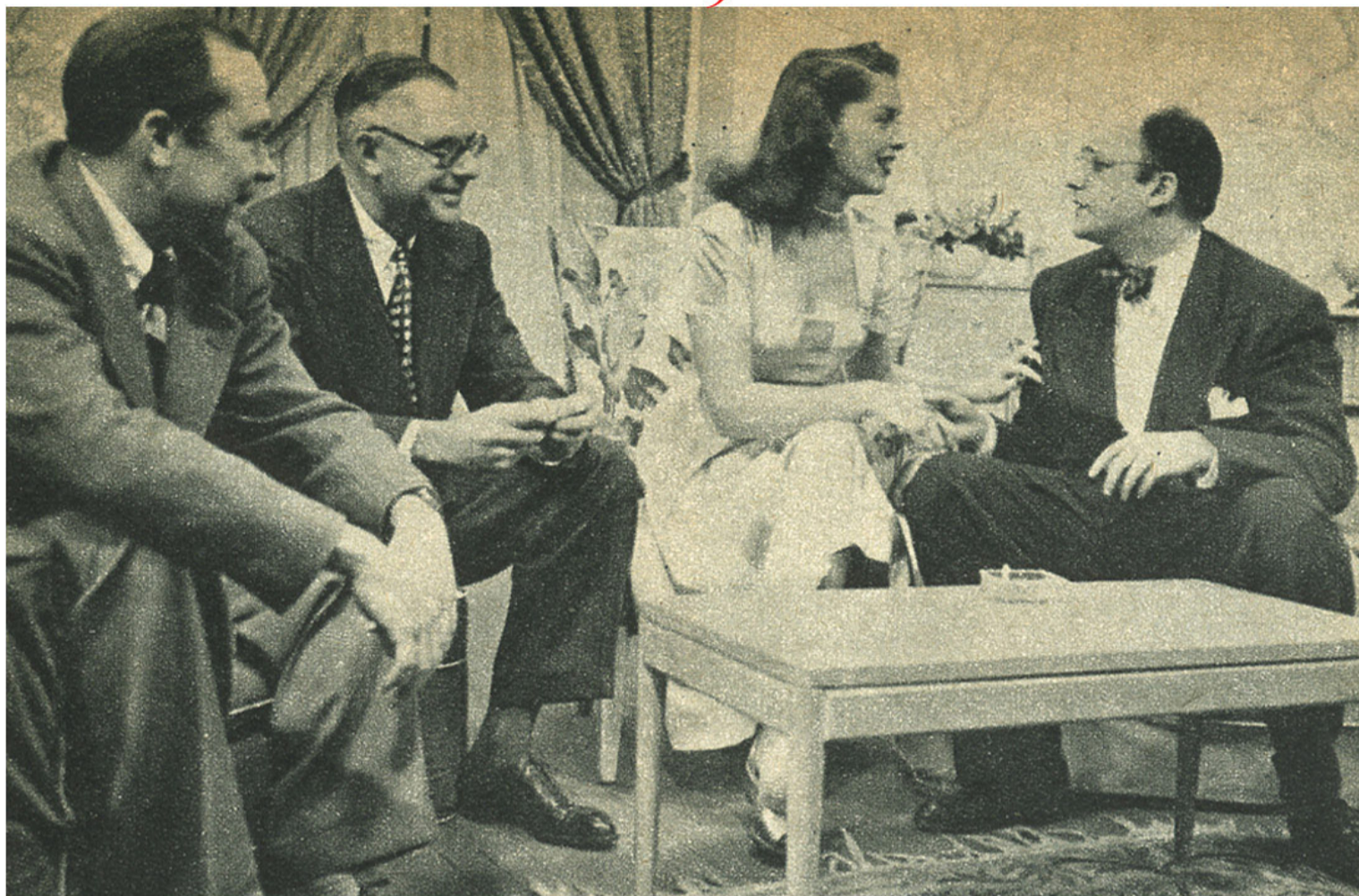
ly, RCA unveiled its “popular-priced” receiver: \$695.

Then came World War II and a virtual halt to TV’s forward march: the coaxial cable was taken over for defense; critical materials went from TV to radar and bombsights. And, despite an occasional telecast—four hours a week—with a patriotic message, Americans could only add TV to their list of dreams for the postwar world.

When TV finally came of age, it was like a giant breaking loose from long-confining bonds. Within three years after the war’s end, television swelled from a timorous infant to the undisputed leadership of show business. In the process, it changed the American scene.

Where there were nine commercial stations and 129 pending appli-

1941: This was Arthur Godfrey’s TV debut.

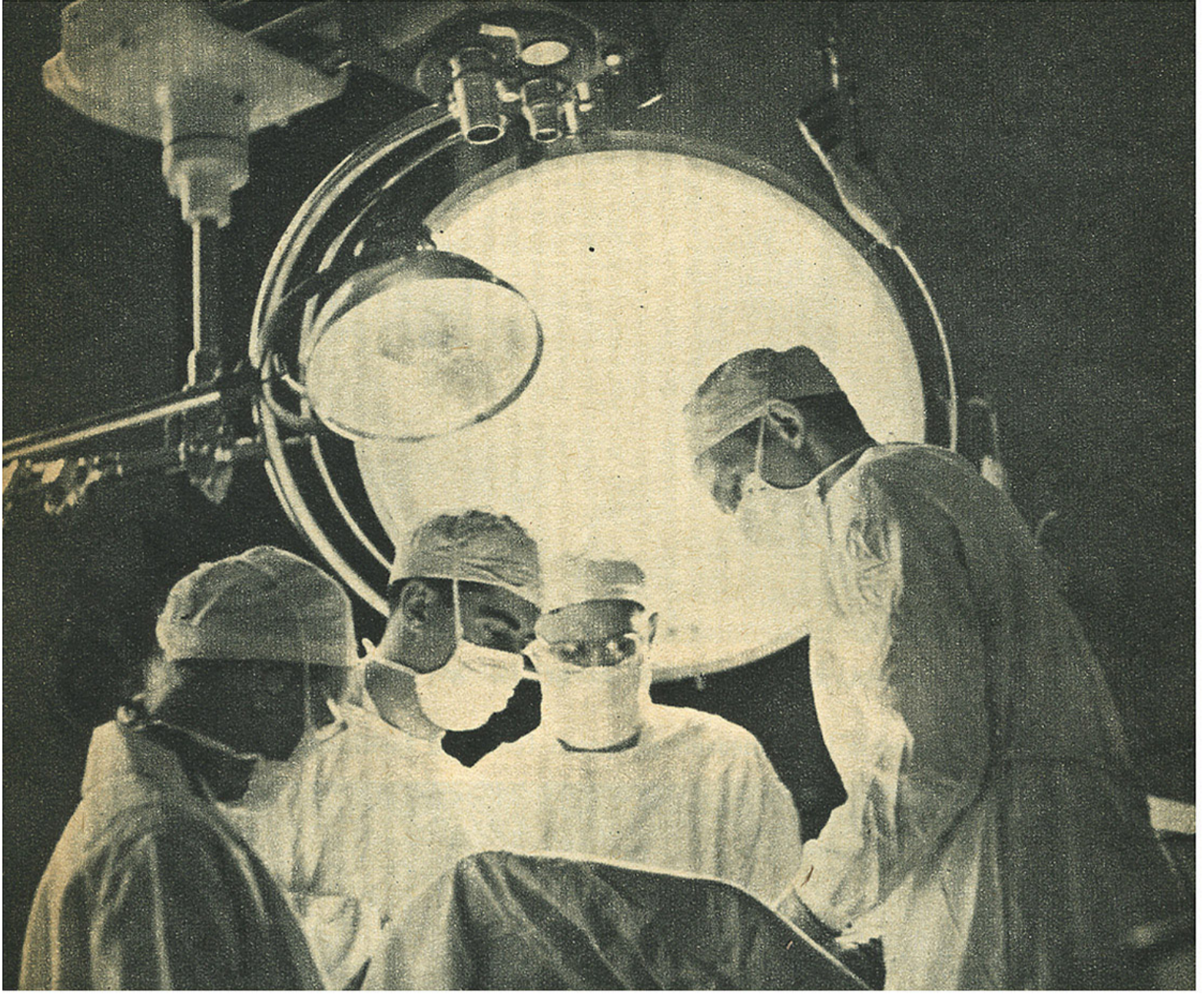


1946: The panel shows became early favorites, as did Jinx Falkenberg.

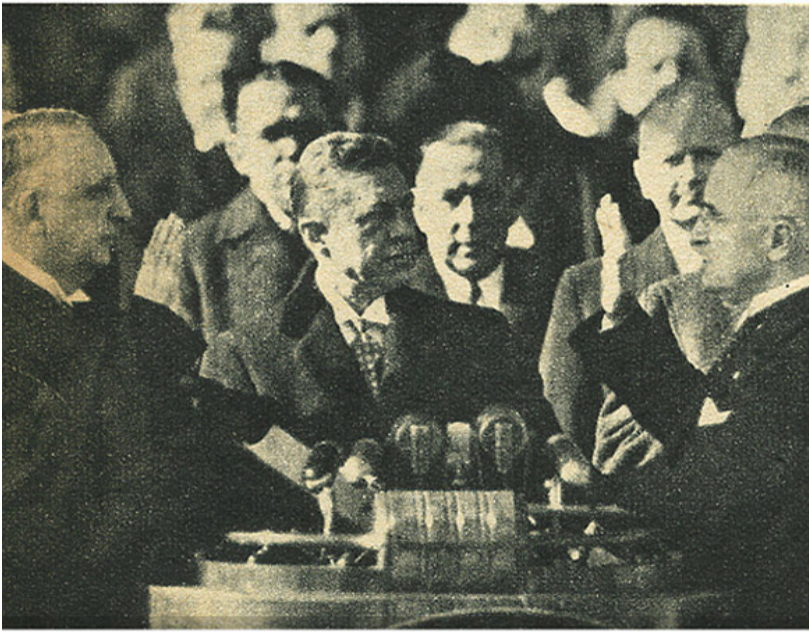
1947: An early commercially-sponsored program featured fashions, music, drama.



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1947: Hundreds of doctors and nurses watched the historic blue-baby operation.



1949: 10,000,000 saw TV's first inaugural.

ications in 1945, there were 48 stations and 247 applications in 1948, as well as 600,000 sets. Sponsors who had paid less than \$200 for an hour of TV time in 1946 now faced hourly charges of from \$20,000 to \$25,000—and fought each other for the right to pick up the tab. Meanwhile, the cost of a receiver had dropped to less than \$500.

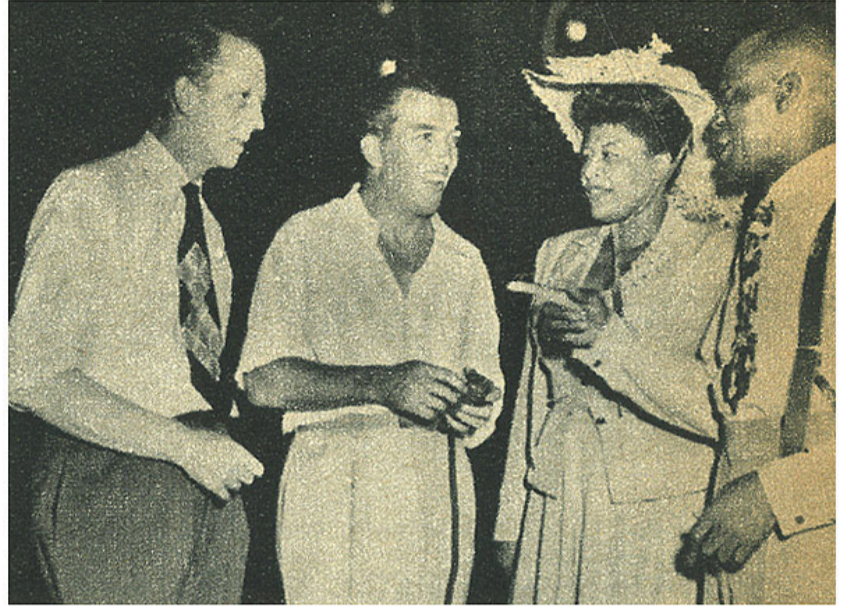
What did the viewers see? Besides the new stars who were becoming household idols, they saw the victory parades for the heroes of World War II; they saw their elected rep-

representatives in action during Congressional sessions and the inauguration of President Truman (more people eyewitnessed this historic event than the sum total of all those who had seen Mr. Truman's predecessors sworn in). They were front row spectators at the World Series of 1947 and the wedding of Princess Elizabeth that same year. A twist of the dial might bring Toscanini, Howdy Doody or Mrs. Roosevelt. The fare was rich; it was varied; it poured into the nation's living rooms in increasing volume.

But beyond the facts, the figures and the stars, a revolution was being wrought in the American way of life. TV chairs and lamps suddenly appeared on the market; living rooms became little theaters. At parties, conversation lagged—until someone turned on the TV set, at which point conversation ended altogether.

America was quickly dividing into two camps over the effects of TV on children. Movie business was hard hit, with some theaters closing their doors on Milton Berle Night (formerly known as Tuesday). Hollywood, which had resolutely closed its eyes—and clenched its fists—at television, refusing even to permit its stars to appear before TV cameras, now quietly began making television movies. "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em," said the moguls *sotto voce*. On the other hand, TV-equipped bars hadn't been so crowded since the end of Prohibition. Their income soared, and *Variety* reported a new kind of want ad: "Bartender wanted; must be able to fix television set."

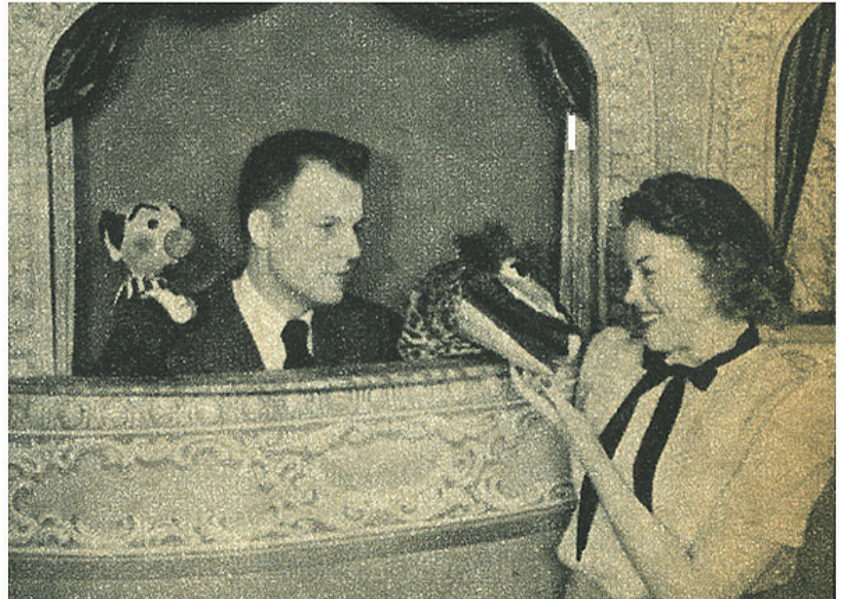
Television brought new dimensions to politics. For the first time,



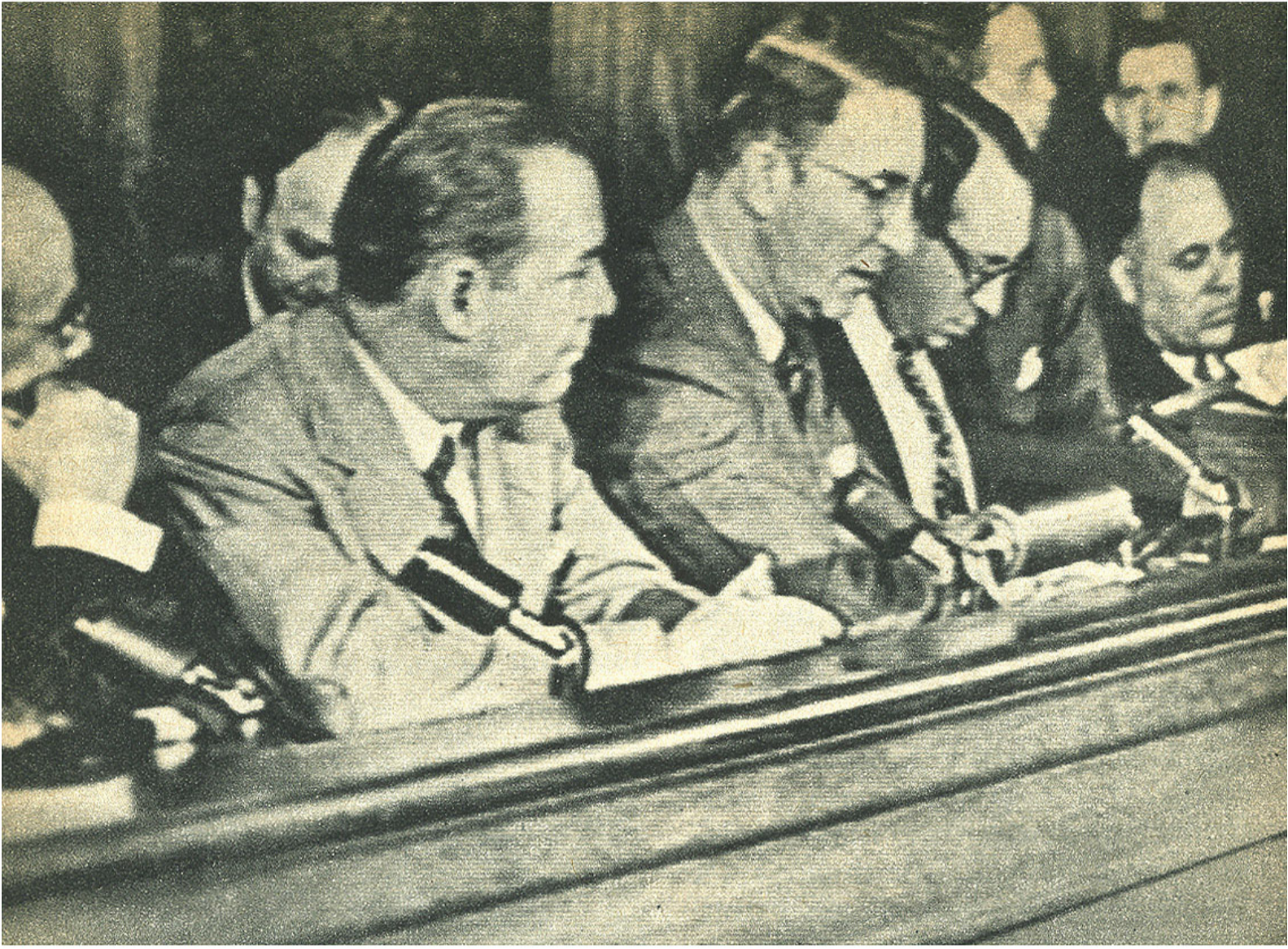
1948: Bill Robinson was a Sullivan guest.



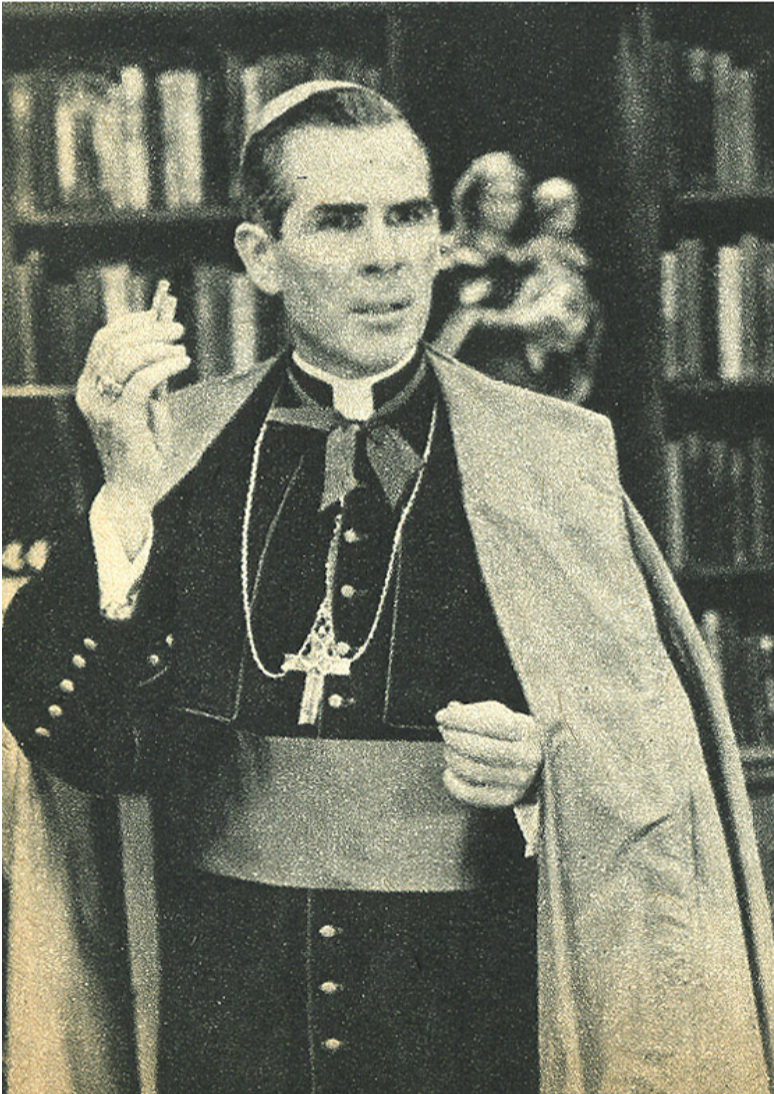
1949: Faye Emerson's neckline is adjusted.



1949: Kids loved Kukla, Fran and Ollie.



1951: The Senate Investigators—an image shot of the Kefauver Committee.



voters had a chance to judge their candidates as something more than newspaper characterizations, and many an old shibboleth fell by the wayside. Governor Thomas E. Dewey, on his way to a political graveyard after being tagged as “the bridegroom on the wedding cake,” made an amazing comeback with a vigorous 18-hour “telethon.” Harry Truman showed himself an humble, sincere public servant, and when the voters returned him to office in history’s greatest political upset, TV told the staggering story as it happened. In 1952, Adlai Stevenson became the avowed Democratic spokesman in three short months, while Dwight D. Eisenhower

1952: Bishop Sheen’s dynamic warmth.

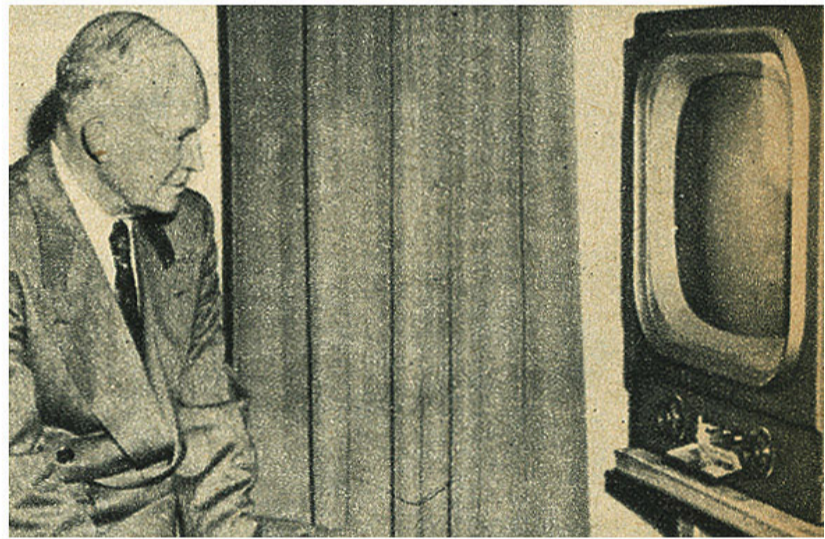


1952: President Truman played the White House piano for 30,000,000 Americans.

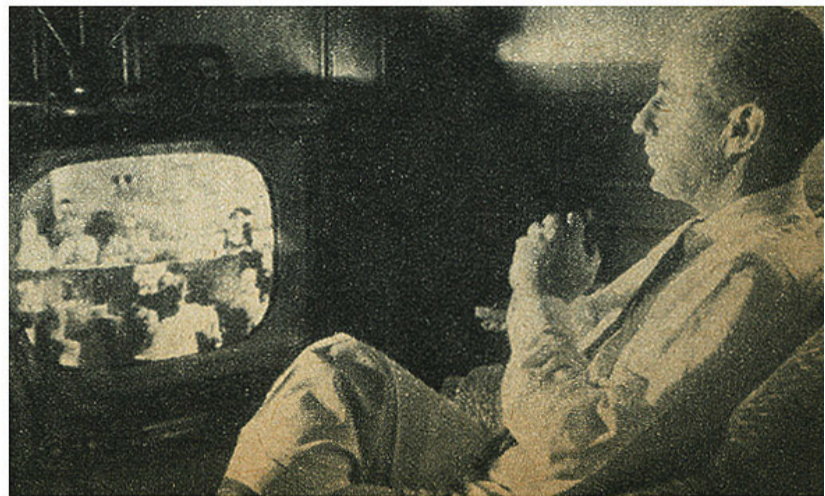
proved he was more than just a military hero—all because of the remarkable facility of television to show a man as he was. During this heated campaign, it became commonplace for dignified statesmen and politicians to submit to pancake make-up and certain specific clothing colors, and any who demurred were told one of television's pet horror stories. Example: a show girl once appeared before the cameras modestly clad in a flesh-colored evening gown, but in millions of living rooms, she came out quite naked.

Television's greatest growing problems were space and materials. Available studios were soon bulg-

1952: Adlai Stevens watched his nomination



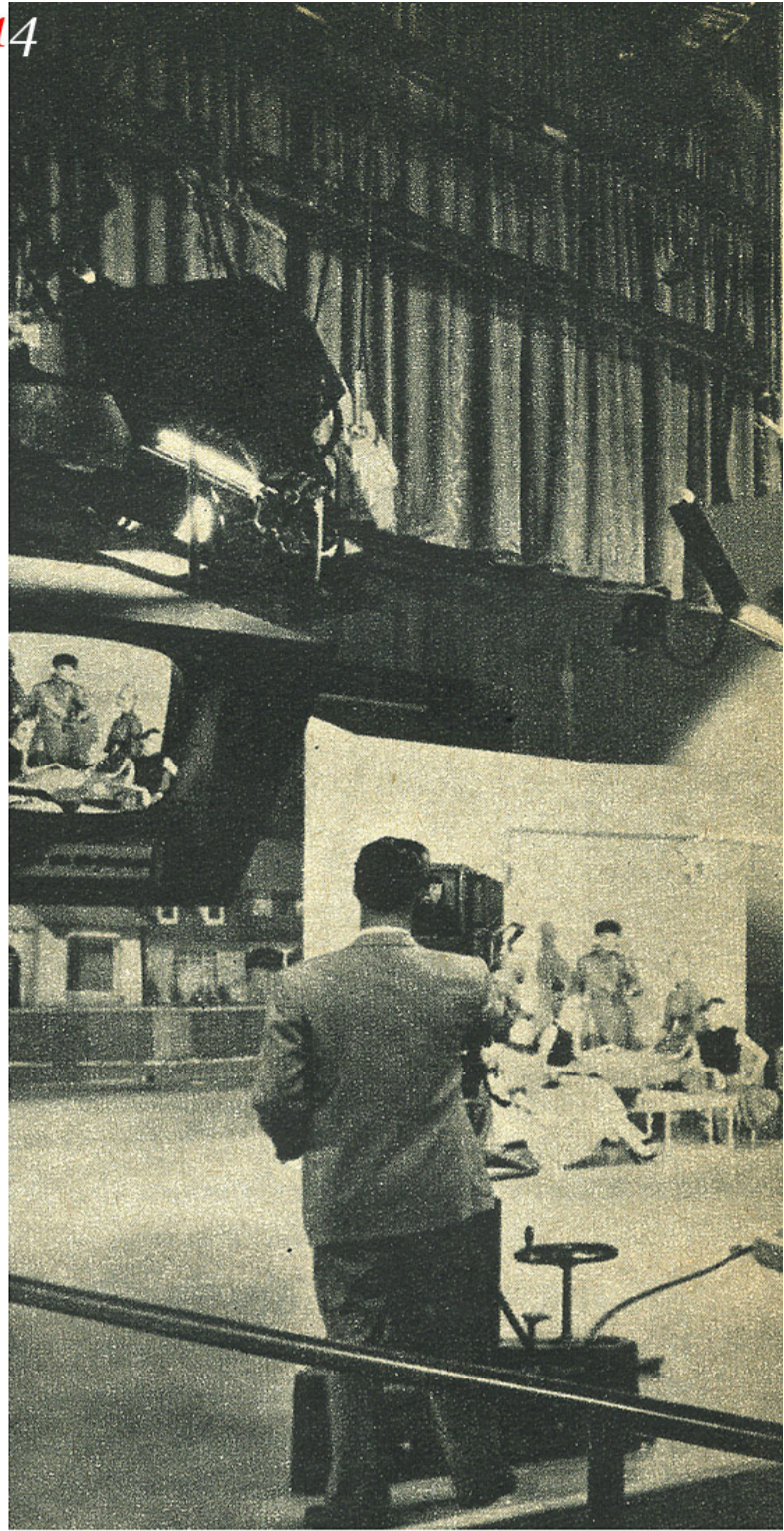
1952: Ike watched runningmate, Nixon.



ing with booms, sets and cameras—and overflowing into legitimate theaters, dance studios and old movie houses. Back drops were consumed at an inordinate rate, as were most set-design staples.

But these were as nothing compared to the fantastic consumption of story material. Libraries were combed for suitable subjects, and the names of short story writers, dead these many years, suddenly appeared among the TV credits. Many a successful show was filmed and shown over and over again to the applause of some listeners and the annoyance of a considerable number of others.

Unexpectedly, assault came from still another quarter: on the hapless head of television, sports promoters heaped the full blame for dwindling gate receipts and threatened to keep the Big Game off the telewaves. But when the chips were down and TV's money was on the line, they almost always relented, with the result that baseball, boxing—except in rare instances—and football continued, as they had

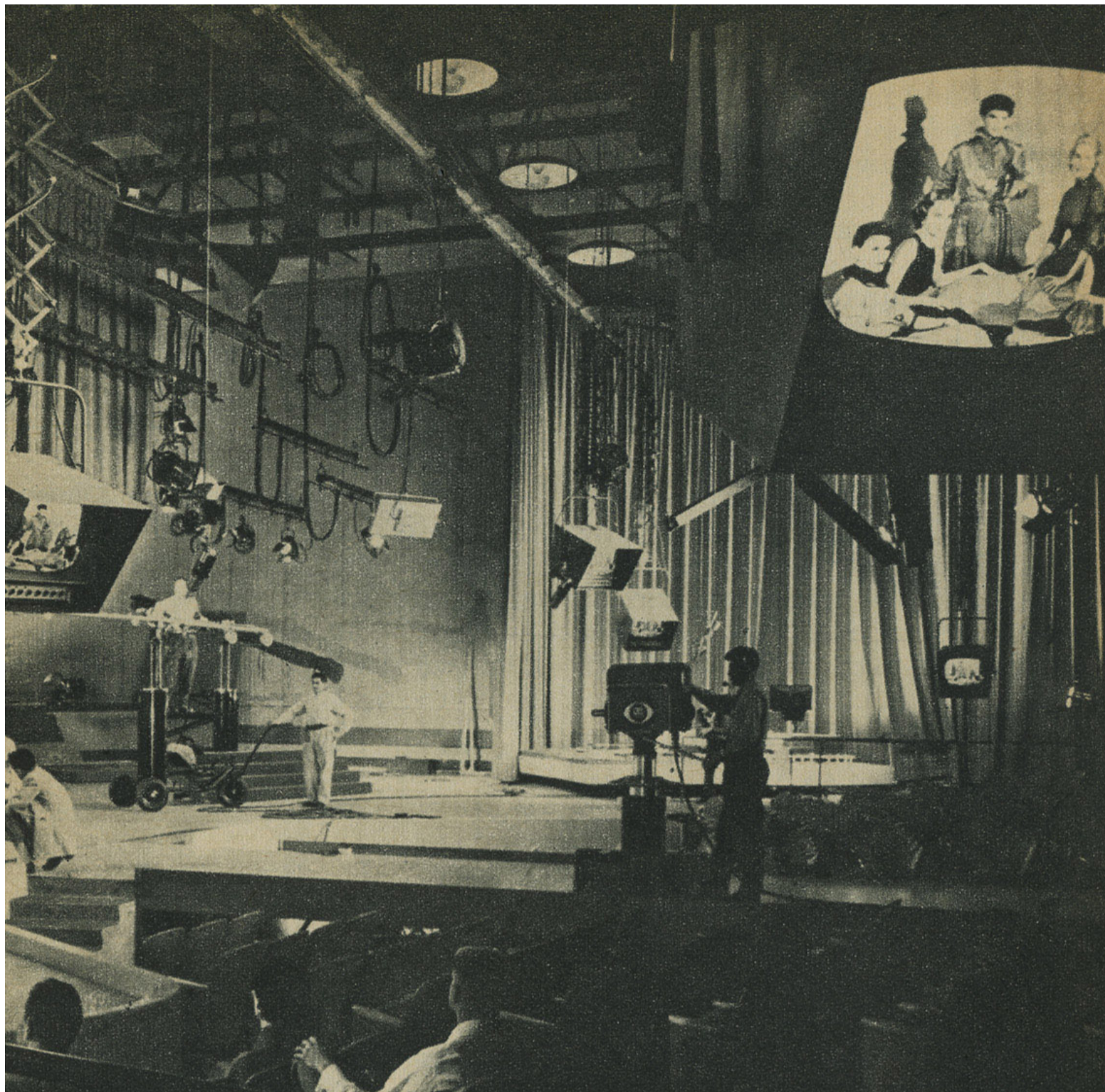


1952: A TV first—Dad sees baby born.

from the beginning, to be television standbys.

To meet the space problem—and to take advantage of the proximity of movie stars who now scrambled to mount the TV bandwagon—CBS built Television City in the heart of Hollywood. NBC countered with a production center of its own in Burbank. With the laying of the coast-to-coast coaxial cable, there was hardly a corner of the country not sprouting the angular antennas

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1951: CBS's mammoth Television City is a preview of the TV studio of the future.

which had become the symbol of the age of television.

Now programs of a different kind appeared. Bishop Fulton Sheen brought a new scope to religion—and won millions of listeners of all creeds. When, in recognition of his new role as a TV star, trade papers dubbed him “Uncle Fultie,” the Bishop responded with characteristic good humor.

Delicate operations were tele-vised for medical students; fathers

even watched their children being born. When a Baltimore school was closed by a strike of maintenance workers, classes were brought into each student's home via TV. There seemed to be no limits to the public-service potential of the box with the magic eye.

There is an old and revered axiom of show business that goes like this: the only thing that will never change is change itself. So be it with television, the newest, brawn-

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iest and most far-reaching facet of the world of entertainment.

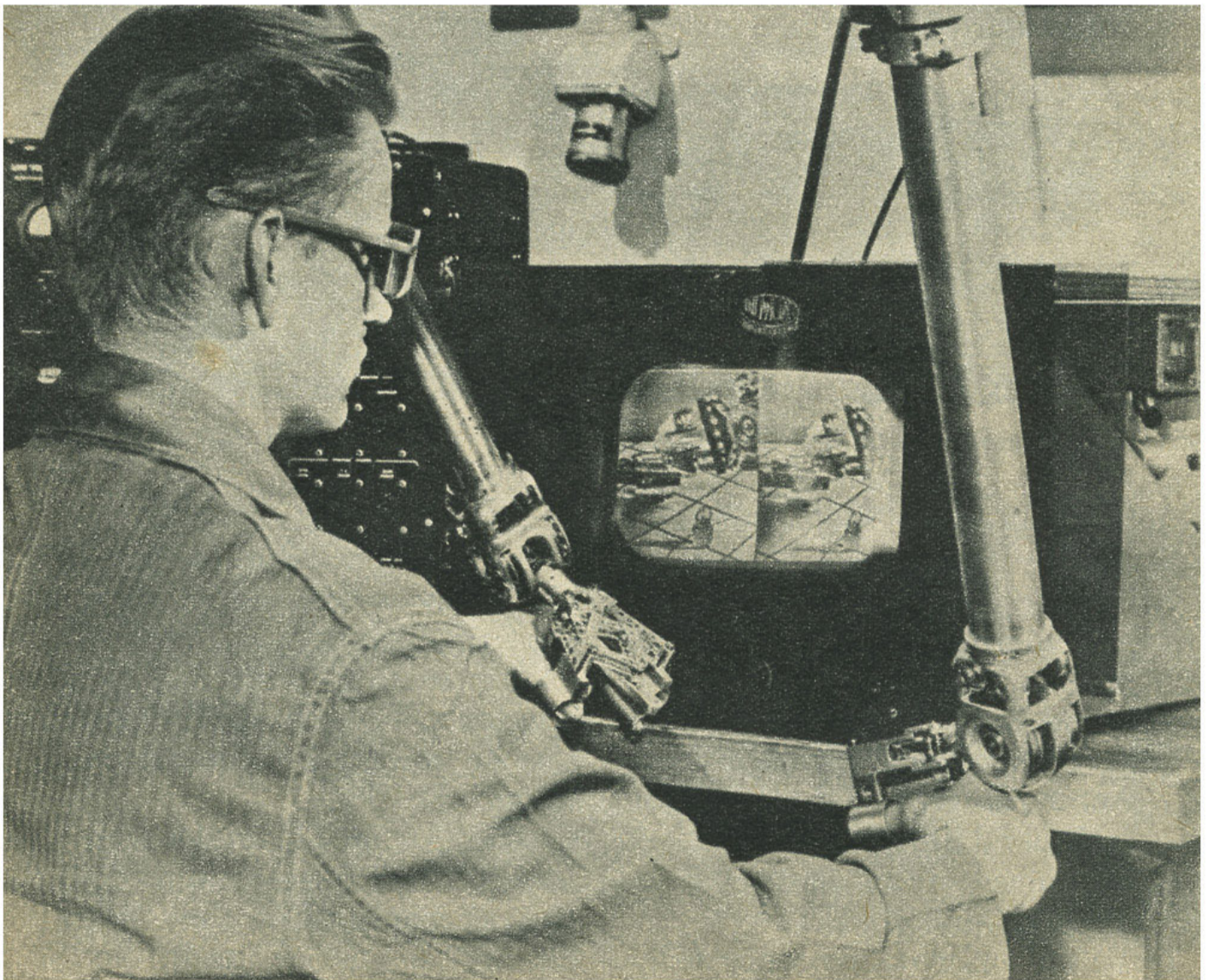
Color television, first demonstrated in 1928, hovers on the horizon. This year, color will be broadcast on a limited scale, but it will be several years before color sets will be mass-produced at prices comparable with those of the best black-and-white sets.

UHF, magic letters to TV executives and scientists, have opened countless new broadcasting channels in the ultra-high frequencies to bring TV service to many new areas. Eventually, it will put more than 2,000 new stations on the air (there are now over 300), including 242 devoted to education and other public-service, non-profit programs.

Also ahead: closed-circuit television which will permit, among other things, housewives to choose their favorite cuts of beef right from the living-room screen and business conventions with the participants thousands of miles apart; television telephones; television camera baby-sitters; and, of course, a system of 3-D which will, inevitably, be labelled "telerama."

And that is where the Television Story stands at this moment. Thirty years of pioneering including less than a decade of actuality have given us 25,000,000 TV sets and a great new window on the world. Only the most confirmed optimist can hazard a guess at what we shall see in the decade to come.

1953: Working with a special 3-D screen, a scientist uses "mechanical" hands.



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