

DAILY NEWS OPERATIONS AT WGN-TV

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
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LAURENCE MARTIN GILL
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ABSTRACT

DAILY NEWS OPERATIONS AT WGN-TV

By

Laurence Martin Gill

Television is the most relied upon source of news and the most believable source in the country today. The responsibility placed on the broadcaster is great. How does he discharge this function in terms of daily news programming? To be specific, how does one station, WGN-TV in Chicago, handle daily news programming? How does the news department operate, why does it operate in a certain way and what can be done to improve it? The idea behind the project was to explore these areas while studying the operation of one department in the station complex as a whole.

Most of the information was gathered through interviews with news department personnel at WGN. The television-radio writer of the Chicago Daily News was interviewed to get a trained but detached view of WGN's newscasts. Recently published material on television and television news provided background and supplementary information. Finally, the writer conducted a study of his own which describes the 10 p.m. newscasts of WGN and the city's network owned and operated stations.

As reported in Chapters I and II, WGN is the only independent VHF station operating in the city of Chicago. It is also the only combined television and radio news operation in the city and its reporters and writers work for both media. There are about 60 people in the department, headed by the WGN vice president of news, the news director and the assistant news director and operations manager.

The producers, reporters, writers, film editors and anchorman have their own responsibilities and operate under general sets of procedures. They are only guidelines and are not severely restrictive. New personnel are given only a brief orientation to the WGN news operation. They are experienced people who have worked in other news departments and are expected to know their jobs.

WGN operates two out-of-town bureaus, one in Washington, D. C. and the other in the state capital at Springfield. The bureaus provide material for television and radio, mainly in the form of interviews with congressmen and legislators. The bureaus emphasize local and regional aspects. The Washington bureau provides very little in the way of national stories.

Besides people, there are other important considerations in operating a news department. News must be gathered from a variety of sources and presented in an acceptable format in order to attract an audience in which the advertiser might

be interested. All of these things are important considerations to the WGN news department. These aspects are reported in Chapter III.

Chapter IV reports the results of the author's study of the 10 p.m. newscasts on WGN and the three owned and operated network stations. Chapter V outlines the editorial operations of the four stations with special emphasis on WGN.

General recommendations are reported in Chapter VI. They include leading off the show from strength, continuing the "Taylor Talks to the People" series, either polish the ad-libbing or discontinue it, tone down the teases, move the participants closer together, make greater use of the out-of-town bureaus, use live interviews, provide analysis and commentary, spend less time on the weather, use audience studies to determine what is more acceptable to the audience and make the editorials say something.

WGN has made valuable contributions to Chicago through its news and editorial programming. However, the station, by virtue of its independent status, is in a unique position to make even greater strides in news programming for the community. Its full potential as a community news service has not been realized.

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A THESIS

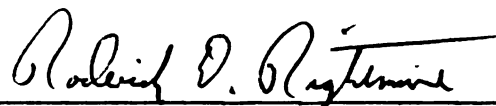
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Director of Thesis

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Television managers are faced increasingly with the responsibility of providing news and information to the country at large. Ninety-five percent of all American homes have a television set¹ and today TV is not only the greatest source of news but it is also rated as the most believable news source.² This adds to the already enormous responsibilities of the broadcaster. How does he deal with this in the area of daily news programming? To be specific, how does one prominent station in the nation's second largest city handle its daily news operation? What does WGN-TV in Chicago do with news, how does it do it, why, and what can be done to improve it? These are the areas to be explored.

The idea behind this project was to find out not only how one department operates in the station complex but also

¹National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, Commission Statement on Violence in Television Entertainment Programs (Statement for use after the press conference of Dr. Milton S. Eisenhower, Chairman of the Commission, September 23, 1969), p. 1.

²Burns W. Roper, A Ten-Year View of Public Attitudes Toward Television and Other Mass Media (New York: Television Information Office, 1969), pp. 3-4.

how that department meets its responsibilities to the public? What are the basics of the operation and what forces and thinking go into the final product? The area of news, with its increasing importance, seemed to provide the best backdrop for the study. Information was sought through interviews with some of the station's news personnel to get basic information about the operation along with the station's view of its news programming. In addition, a television newspaper writer and critic provided a trained, but detached view of the station's success, or lack of it, in the daily news area. Finally, recently published material on television and television news was used as background and supplementary information along with the writer's own study of the 30 minute 10 p.m. news on Chicago's four VHF stations.

WGN as an Independent

WGN is the only independent VHF station operating in the nation's third largest market. Its major competition consists of the three network owned and operated stations (O and O's). The independent is at a severe disadvantage in that it cannot cover national and international events the way a network and its affiliates can. The O and O receives daily feeds of news film and video tape. The independent does not have this visual service. Operations manager Al Reznik believes that this is WGN's greatest problem in competing with network

stations.³ The O and O's also have more news airtime because of the network newscasts they carry in addition to their own locally produced news shows.

The fact that WGN has to buy almost all of its programming limits the budget for news. This is an important factor as Bob Manewith, former news director and now editorial director, explains:

most of the television stations [in the Chicago market], the four V's anyway, generate just about the same amount of revenue a year--somewhere between 20 and 25 million dollars. Now how do you spend the revenue? Well, our network competitors have very little to spend it on other than news and they can allocate [for news] four, five, maybe six times . . . more than we can because we have to buy our other programming while they are being paid by the network for carrying programs they didn't produce. Sports: . . . runs us about four million a year. Childrens programming runs us a couple of million. Movies: we've got a tremendous investment in a movie library. . . . There are syndicated programs we have to buy. The cost of selling for us is higher because we have to sell our own time whereas for six or nine hours a day, most of the business is through the network at the network stations. Sure, there are station breaks and some participating stuff, but the volume of business the network affiliate has to generate for itself is far less than the volume we have to generate for ourselves, so our cost of doing business is higher.⁴

Also, along with a lower budget comes fewer news personnel that can be hired and this is a disadvantage.

On the other hand, the independent station does possess some advantages in news. "We are a Chicago station," says

³Interview with Al Reznik, Assistant News Director and Operations Manager, WGN Chicago, September 3, 1970.

⁴Interview with Robert Manewith, Editorial Director, WGN Chicago, June 17, 1970.

Al Reznik, "and we get into places into Chicago that they don't and we have friends in Chicago that they don't."⁵

In local coverage, WGN is not at any disadvantage. It airs more local stories than the three O and O's and can appeal to the local interests of the audience. WGN's Washington bureau is there for one purpose only, to provide the audience with local and regional stories from the nation's capital.

Combined Department

A news director and operations manager administer the TV-radio news department and the writers and reporters work for both media. Al Reznik said that the advantages of operating a combined department far outweigh the disadvantages:

All our people are qualified to work in the other area if necessary. Advantages also include that we can go out on the street and cover a television or radio story at the same time and the material will come in physically to the same area. . . . Advantages are that certain stories which can't, because of the breaking atmosphere, be covered with a sound camera but can be covered with a tape recorder and a silent camera and can very easily be converted with sound over silent. Advantages are that if you cover a story in sound and you have an audio malfunction [with film equipment] you can always very easily dub from the tape recorder to the sound film.⁶

⁵Reznik, interview, September 3, 1970.

⁶Ibid.

Mr. Reznik mentioned only one disadvantage in running a dual department. Most people, he believes, like to know in which area they will be working. With a combined department, a writer, for example, may be writing for radio one day, television the next and radio again the day after that. Reznik thinks a person is "desirous of saying I am a radio news writer knowing I will be a radio news writer today, tomorrow and yesterday and not put on my radio hat today and my television hat tomorrow."⁷

⁷Ibid.

CHAPTER II

STAFF AND ORGANIZATION

In the past five to ten years, news personnel at local television stations have markedly increased. A study conducted by Herman W. Land Associates which was reported in the publication, Television and the Wired City (hereafter called the Land Report), documents this growth. In its survey, 114 out of 151 reporting stations have expanded their news staffs over the last five years,¹ as indicated in Table 1, page 7. WGN-TV is no exception. The news department had 12 staffers in 1957,² 43 in 1966³ and 52 in 1968.⁴

Staff Composition

Today, approximately 60 people staff the TV-radio news department. The staff breaks down as follows:

¹Herman W. Land Associates, Inc., Television and the Wired City (Washington: National Association of Broadcasters, 1968), p. 180.

²Manewith interview, June 17, 1970.

³WGN, The Wonderful World of WGN (1966), p. 29.

⁴Gene Filip, "Informing the Public via TV and Radio News and Public Affairs," Speech presented at the Women's Society, Elmwood Park Methodist Church, Elmwood Park, Illinois, February 18, 1969.

Table 1

Increase in News Staff Size^a

Question: How many stations showed an increase in number of persons employed exclusively by the news department over 5 years?

Average all-day audience (ARB)	Net Affiliate		Independent		Total
	Over 500,000	Under 500,000	Over 500,000	Under 500,000	
Increased	12	22	6	2	42
Same as 5 years ago	0	3	3	1	7
Less than 5 years ago	0	0	0	1	1
Not on air 5 years ago	0	1	4	1	6
No answer, don't know, refused	1	0	3	1	5
Total responded	12	25	9	4	50

^aLand, Television and the Wired City, p. 180.

- 1--Vice President of News for WGN Continental Broadcasting--Bruce Dennis
- 1--Manager of News or News Director--Charles Harrison
- 1--Assistant News Director and Operations Manager--Al Reznik
- 1--Assignment Editor
- 1--Assistant Assignment Editor
- 1--Weekend Assignment Editor
- 5--Television producers
- 19--Writers
 - 2--Radio news voices
 - 4--Film editors
 - 7--Reporters
 - 4--At the Washington Bureau
 - 7--Film cameramen
 - 1--Anchorman
 - 4--Secretaries
 - 1--Film librarian
 - 2--Couriers
 - 1--News intern

There are also other miscellaneous part-timers such as couriers, news readers, Springfield cameraman, etcetera.

If it were possible to break out the employees for television only, the station would have less people on its news staff than the other four VHF stations. WLS-TV (ABC) employs about 50 people, WBBM-TV (CBS) employs 80 people and WMAQ-TV (NBC) employs approximately 100 in its news department.

News departments around the country, of course, differ in size. WGN's television news department is larger than some major market stations and smaller than others. According to author William Wood, in his book Electronic Journalism, WDSU, New Orleans has 16 news staffers; WTVJ, Miami has 30; there are 46 at KSTP in Minneapolis-St. Paul; KNXT, Los Angeles employees 72; WCBS in New York has a 145 man news department.⁵ Broadcasting reports that KPIX, San Francisco has 36 people on its television news staff; WSM-AM-TV, Nashville has 15; and WHTN, in Huntington, West Virginia, has 10 people.⁶ These figures do not include stringers and other part-time employees.

Staff Structure and Procedures

The structure of the WGN news department has changed over the past few years. Before Bob Manewith became Manager of News in December, 1968, there was a radio news director and a television news director under the Vice President for news. In 1968, the radio and television jobs were merged. In February, 1970 Al Reznik was promoted to his current post of Assistant News Director and Operations Manager and in

⁵William Wood, Electronic Journalism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 38.

⁶"What it Takes to Score in Local News," Broadcasting, January 5, 1970, pp. 19, 21-22.

June, Manewith left the news department and became Editorial Director. Charles Harrison, Associate News Director at WAVE-TV in Louisville, Kentucky, assumed the position of News director on August 31, 1970. In short, Harrison and Reznik now share the responsibilities of the department.

Reznik explains:

As we are presently structured, which is different than we were ever structured before, the news director's . . . area of prime concern is in the product. My area of prime concern is in the operation. I assist him in the product and he assists me in the operation.⁷

It remains to be seen how this system will work.

Author-newsman Maury Green says in his book Television News, that management should recognize that the job of news director "is really two jobs: news production and departmental administration."⁸ Mr. Green goes on to say:

such a division of authority is impractical. The rivalry it would create between the two executives would be destructive of the best interests of the news organization, and the man who dealt with top management [in this case the business administrator] would probably soon become top dog, in contradiction of the proposition that a news department should be run by a newsman.⁹

However, it should be pointed out that in making the above statement, Mr. Green assumes that the administrator would not have a thorough knowledge of journalism and television news. This is not the case with Al Reznik at WGN. He was a

⁷Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

⁸Maury Green, Television News (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1969), p. 279.

⁹Ibid., p. 279.

newspaper reporter before joining WGN News as a writer, producer and assignment editor. Charles Harrison has been in broadcast news for over 25 years. Both men deal with management and it may be that Green's prediction will not materialize.

The news department must work along with the other departments at the station if the total operation is to function smoothly. The news managers report to the Vice President for News but on urgent or major matters, they may have to go to the General Manager. Normally, the news department is allowed to proceed on its own as far as daily news judgment is concerned. The buck stops at the news department. "We're it," says Al Reznik. "We make our own decisions. We sink or swim. . . ." ¹⁰

The news department must deal directly with the program managers in programming matters. Since the Program Department controls the air time, it sets program length.¹¹ If the news department wanted a 15 minute newscast expanded to a half hour, the program department would have to allocate the time. If, after the point is debated, the news director is refused, he can appeal to the general manager. The point is that news has to fit into the overall program schedule. It comes down

¹⁰Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

¹¹Manewith interview, June 17, 1970.

to an allocation of time for news as well as other program classifications.

Depending on what needs to be decided, the decision-making process will differ. One case would be a change in the news set. Cooperation is essential as Bob Manewith explains:

This is a very, in a sense, informal company. We've all known each other for a long time. Let's say I [as news director] want a new set. So I go to the head of the arts and facilities department. I have an idea and basically this is what I'd like to achieve in the set. So they draw some sketches, some proposals are made and I talk to some of the programming people and the production people, primarily to see whether there are going to be any hangups in actually using the set because of how the cameras have to move and where the mikes [should be]. . . . They may realize something I didn't see because I'm not a production expert. So its done in that sort of fashion.¹²

In fact, this is what happened later in the year. The new weather man, Jerry Petersen, desired changes in the set so that he could better present the weather from his standpoint. The various departments and people mentioned by Manewith did cooperate in the project.¹³

Regularly scheduled meetings for News Department staffers are not held. Occasionally, get-togethers are called "sometimes of necessity, other times just to sit down and chat."¹⁴

¹²Ibid.

¹³Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

¹⁴Ibid.

Bob Manewith says it is neither possible nor practical to hold regularly scheduled meetings for news personnel:

There are always people at work. People are working every conceivable time of the day. There are always people off. You cannot at any given time have a meeting for the whole News Department. It's an impossibility and to impose on people to come in on a day off or after they've worked midnight to eight and to come in at 2:30 in the afternoon for a meeting. . . . We do have meetings, but attendance is never made mandatory for everyone. You just can't do it. There are small sub-meetings, five or six people involved in a certain thing so you meet with them as often as you have too.¹⁵

He went on to say that general staff meetings may be held once or twice a year. It appears as if staffers have access to Harrison, Reznik and others if problems should arise. To a great extent, WGN news appears to be an informal operation. When situations come up that need discussion, the administrative personnel are available and quite willing to talk.

The Producer and News Values

The producer determines the style and content of the news program. He is the one who decides what should be included and what should be omitted. He decides the order of the stories, their length, film to be used and who is to write each story. These decisions involve a great deal of subjective judgment on the part of the producer. Author and newsman Maury Green comments:

¹⁵Manewith interview, June 17, 1970.

The use or nonuse of every single story in every news broadcast, the time allotted to the story, the placement of the story within the broadcast, the style of its presentation, the personality assigned to it-- every one of these things must be decided deliberately, and every decision involves a qualitative value judgment.¹⁶

What emerges then is an opinion of what is "the news."

Author William Wood says, "it has the stamp of news on it, not necessarily for any better reason than that the newsman says it's news. The audience has its mind made up for it. . . ."¹⁷

Since it is the producer who has to make the judgment what is news and do this in an imposed time limit, what criteria are used to make this judgment? At WGN, three criteria are used to guide the producer, significance, quality and the availability of material. At the same time, these must be placed in the context of the producer having only a very limited amount of time to devote to the news.

Significance

Maury Green defines significance: "the more people it concerns, the greater its news value. The more it is likely to change their lives, their society and their destiny, the greater its news value."¹⁸ It is this criterion which WGN

¹⁶Green, Television News, p. 230.

¹⁷Wood, Electronic Journalism, p. 83.

¹⁸Green, Television News, p. 46.

News places first in determining the value of a story and whether or not it will be included in any particular newscast.¹⁹ In television, however, the significance factor has to compete with another element basic to television, the pictorial or visual value of a story. Operations manager Al Reznik said that if two equally significant stories are available, he or his producers would choose the one with film or the one which has the best likelihood of providing good footage.²⁰ But he went on to say that significance takes precedence, film or no film:

If your major story of the day is the war ended in Vietnam, I'm going to use that whether I have film or not. . . . All things being equal in the worth of the story, film is going to get first choice. [However] I've had several of my people say to me we've had seven minutes of international news without one piece of film on the show. Why? And my very obvious answer is because the international news was more important. . . .²¹

The lead story of the show is determined in the same manner. It is what the producer thinks is the most important story of the day. It can be a national or a local story. "We're in a job to report news" says Al Reznik, "and why bury the best story of the day because you are a local station?"²² In any case, it should be the most significant

¹⁹Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

story of the day up to the time of the newscast. Again, if in the producer's mind two stories are equal in news value, the story with the best visuals will get preference. The very fact that it has film makes it more interesting and since the "film story is uniquely television's; the producer is therefore anxious to let the viewer see the news, as opposed to merely hearing or reading about it. . . ." ²³

Quality

This factor pertains mainly to film and its use on a newscast. Quality comes before quantity, says Al Reznik. "I would rather dump a piece of film than use it if it isn't worth going on the air." ²⁴

Quality, however, can also be applied to the manner in which a story is covered. For example, the producer assigns a writer on city council activities for the day. The writer will then view the film and look at the wire copy and/or the reporter's notes. It might have been a busy day at city council and the film footage may be of good enough quality to put together a two or three minute story. The writer tells the producer this and the latter judges that the story actually does deserve two or three minutes, and the city council story gets that much time because the story is important and the film quality is high. It had not been predetermined that

²³Green, Television News, p. 237.

²⁴Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

city council would get "X" amount of time. Certain factors were taken into consideration after all the information and film was in. This was in contrast to a Los Angeles station Al Reznik visited earlier in the year. That station blocked out how much time they were going to allot to a story before the story had been covered by a reporter. "What happens if the city council doesn't deserve two minutes?" asked Al Reznik. "The answer I got was, it is going to get two minutes" whether it deserved it or not.²⁵

A crew may cover three or four stories a day for WGN News, however, there is no guarantee that any of its efforts will be aired, because the quality or importance, as determined by the producer, may not merit inclusion into the show.

Availability of Material

The producer, of course, cannot use what he does not have. At WGN, more local than national stories will be aired because the station is an independent and does not have the daily feeds of national and international news coming from the network. Its film will emphasize local coverage. When a non-local story is aired, there may not be any visuals available, film or slide. (This is not to say that WGN has film or slides for all of its local stories.) And even if visuals are available, they may not be used. "Not every story lends itself to film," says Bob Manewith, "and just

²⁵Ibid.

to show silent footage of, in essence, a still picture of the outside of a building where "X" happened is rather a waste of film."²⁶

Reporters

WGN News employs seven street reporters in Chicago. Most are on general assignment. The figure would rise to ten if Jack Taylor and the two Washington bureau men were included. Because the Springfield bureau reporter is not assigned to the state capital the year around, he is counted as working out of Chicago. Each reporter, when covering a film story, is accompanied by a cameraman and a sound man. (In smaller markets the reporter may be the cameraman. This is the case at WHTH in Huntington, West Virginia where reporters "operate singly shooting their own silent and sound film. When it is desirable to have the reporter on film, a colleague goes along to run the camera.")²⁷ WGN reporters are members of the American Federation of Radio and Television Artists. Smaller market stations such as WSM in Nashville have reporters which are non-union.

Shifts

In June, Bob Manewith said the news department utilized

²⁶Manewith interview, June 17, 1970.

²⁷Broadcasting, January 5, 1970, p. 22.

five crews Monday through Friday. They worked staggered, eight hour shifts, one from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., two from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., one from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and one from noon to 8:00 p.m.²⁸ In September, Al Reznik outlined the shifts of six reporter-cameraman-sound man crews, one beginning at 6:30 a.m., two at 8:45 a.m., two at 10:00 a.m. and one starting at noon. Two crews operate on the weekends.²⁹ Each crew normally handles three or four assignments a day.³⁰ For the most part, crews keep the same working hours. They are shifted because of vacations, of course, and they can be rotated if the managers deem it necessary.³¹

Beats

WGN News does not employ the beat system of reporting but some of the reporters on the staff do specialize. Steve Schickel, who is a "full-time reporter, is also our Springfield correspondent. John Hogan is the environmental editor. Wendell Smith handles sports. The other men do not have specific beats but do have specific talents and are used in those areas."³² Other areas of specialization would be the

²⁸Manewith interview, June 17, 1970.

²⁹Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

³⁰Broadcasting, January 5, 1970, p. 20.

³¹Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

³²Ibid.

weathermen and the Washington bureau reporters. General assignment reporters do gain some expertise in various areas, although they are not assigned with this purpose in mind:

It's almost by the nature of the way the business of covering news operates; some have become experts by nature of their past assignments which sometimes are dictated by the hours they work. For instance, the Mayor's news conferences are always at 10:30 a.m. so [it's] usually one of the 9:00 a.m. crews that covers.³³

In contrast to this system, another major market station, KDKA in Pittsburgh, assigns its reporters differently:

'We began using the beat system, assigning one man full-time to coverage of the city-county government. We also hired a full-time investigative reporter without the hinderances of daily time deadlines. One of our reporters began to specialize in an ombudsman role doing daily features on the little guy versus the establishment. One became a daily reporter of business and politics. Another began regular critical reviews of the arts and entertainment available. Still another emphasizes reporting and problems and achievements of youth.'³⁴

Assignment

Almost 100% of the time, reporters are assigned specific stories to cover by the assignment editor. Occasionally, a reporter is given some latitude, especially in the summer if things get a little slow.³⁵ The one female reporter on the staff does features mainly and she suggests stories and does the digging for material herself. The station also employs

³³Interview with Robert Manewith, Editorial Director, WGN Chicago, August 6, 1970.

³⁴Land, Television and the Wired City, p. 182.

³⁵Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

two silent cameramen who usually work on assignment, although at times they are allowed to cruise.

Covering the Story

Once assigned, the reporter is basically on his own in determining how to cover the story. A breaking story must be left to the reporter. It would be unreasonable for the newsroom to try and tell him exactly what to do. On the other hand,

if there is a specific news conference, they are going to see a specific person. But if they see somebody else that is there or know of somebody else that should also be spoken to, they will call the desk and say I think we ought to talk to John Doe or I see Joe Blow over here--what do you think? Obviously, he's going to do it.³⁶

WGN reporters are given only a few guidelines in covering a story. Al Reznik listed some do's and don'ts:

Don't get yourself in trouble. Be wary of dangerous situations. It is not necessary to shoot a two-shot all the time. Use reversal questions. Make use of a silent camera on sound stories. And most important, make doggone sure that you turn in material with your story so that we don't have to call you at ten o'clock at night and say what in the hell is the story about.³⁷

Reporters do not write their own stories and the amount of material they provide depends on the story itself. The use of reverse questions, where the camera films the reporter asking the question after the interview is completed, is

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

standard practice in many newsrooms because it gives film editors greater latitude in editing. Reporters should prepare for the story beforehand, if possible. If they know who they are going to interview, they should do their homework and ask the appropriate questions.

Travel and Communications

The reporter, cameraman and soundman travel in the cameraman's car. He receives a car allowance and the station bears the cost of any extra equipment, such as heavy shock absorbers. Every car is equipped with a two-way radio and a walkie-talkie set. The station also owns two news units (station wagons) which are available all the time. Mobile remote units are normally not used for news. Two full-time and two part-time couriers, using cars and motorcycles, are employed. Helicopters are used on occasion for news events and their coverage.

Working with the Crew

The reporter is the boss of the crew and it is his responsibility to "produce" the story. He decides on the style of the coverage, both visual and verbal. Generally, reporters stay with the same crew over a period of time until a shift change is made. This allows them to get used to each other and "if he is wise, the reporter will lean heavily on his crew. . . . Certain decisions should be left to them, depending on the reporter's judgment of their abilities; other

decisions must be left to them."³⁸ These men are more competent to make technical decisions and if the reporter is performing, the cameraman necessarily becomes the director.

Investigative Reporting

Investigative reporting on daily news programs is generally lacking in Chicago. WGN does not have a full-time investigative reporter and does not set a quota of such reports for itself. Intermittently, however, the station does pursue matters which require investigative reporting. The News Department has worked with the Better Government Association, a private investigative agency that works with all the media. When something is uncovered, the BGA likes to bring maximum publicity and exposure to the subject.

Bob Manewith cited the problems of manpower, time and equipment which hinder investigative reporting. "The difficulty with investigative reporting in the historic journalism sense, in television particularly, is equipment. It's pretty hard to keep it a secret when you set up lights and a sound camera."³⁹ For the most part, this coincides with Maury Green's notion that "in most shops, routine reporting and production duties leave the newsman little time to delve deeply into promising stories of substance which require

³⁸Green, Television News, p. 162.

³⁹Manewith interview, June 17, 1970.

extensive legwork and investigation. . . ."40 And if it is done at all it is usually by one man or it is rotated among staff members.

Analysis and Commentary

With the exception of editorials, WGN does not normally do analysis and commentary. News analysis was done at one time but it did not do well in terms of audience response.⁴¹ Also it seems that two other reasons had entered into the decision to not do analysis and commentary. Bob Manewith said "the time on the newscast we felt was more valuable for news."⁴² The same thinking was voiced by Al Reznik: "we just haven't chosen to do it. In my opinion one of the reasons is we don't have a big enough news hole." He went on to express another factor: "I have an adequate, yet limited, amount of personnel and this also creates a problem."⁴³

Staff Cartoonist

The news and editorial departments share a full-time staff cartoonist. He was hired in June. Before that, the news department used artists working for arts and facilities or somebody would be hired on a free-lance basis. "We

⁴⁰Green, Television News, p. 205.

⁴¹Manewith interview, August 6, 1970.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

thought," said Al Reznik, "he would be a fine additon to our staff, both in news and on the editorial side."⁴⁴

Writers and Film Editors

WGN employs 19 writers in its newsroom and they write for both radio and television, although Al Reznik says he is moving in the direction of building a radio news team and a television news team. All wire copy must be rewritten and the producer must approve the copy. The sports news is written by the assistant sports editor. Writers are union, belonging to the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW).

Writers are expected to be able to write in any news area. They may write local news one day and national news the next. The producer assigns what they will write for each show. Five television newscasts are aired each day. The fifteen minute 6:15 a.m. show is handled by one writer and the fifteen minute 1:00 p.m. program uses two writers. Four men write the 5:15 p.m. newscast (fifteen minutes), five writers are assigned to the important half hour 10:00 p.m. show and one man writes the thirty minute "Nightbeat" news program broadcast after the late movie.

Writers, of course, must work closely with film editors. Occasionally a reporter is in the film editing room, but the

⁴⁴Ibid.

instances are rare. The writer makes the decisions in the editing room but the "wise writer of course listens carefully to the suggestions of the experienced editor who is likely to see cinematic possibilities which the writer can easily overlook."⁴⁵ At times, however, the writer will not enter the editing room. If silent film is to be run with the story, "the writer may say to the film editor, I need 20 seconds of silent, and we have enough confidence in our film editors to know they will pick out 20 seconds of good silent film."⁴⁶ Cooperation and confidence are necessary for the proper functioning of the writer and film editor and this can be said for the newsroom in general. The writer must screen the film carefully, know what is on it and realize the biases inherent in it because "the picture seldom tells all of the story; it must be supplemented by words. Sometimes what the picture shows is not what really happened, and the truth of the matter must be explained," says Maury Green.⁴⁷ The film, most likely, tells only part of the story, requiring narration to fill in and explain what is happening. WGN's Bob Manewith agrees with Maury Green. Very little film can stand by itself, says Manewith, and only the most dramatic film needs no narration: "The stories that can truly stand

⁴⁵Green, Television News, pp. 118-119.

⁴⁶Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

⁴⁷Green, Television News, p. 41.

on their own pictorially without any comment are very few. Even a parade, for example, you have to tell . . . where the parade was and why it was."⁴⁸

Anchorman: Jack Taylor

In referring to the entertainment side of television, the Land Report emphasized that the medium is "dealing with two factors at all times: talent and audience. . . . It is not talent per se which is ever the question but talent which is capable of attracting audiences."⁴⁹ This is no less true in news programming. On the air talent is important. Often times, it is the deciding factor in whether a news program is successful, that is, successful in terms of attracting audience. Author William Wood goes so far as to say that "a station that has the town's favorite newsman can beat a rival station however good the rival's news product may be."⁵⁰ In most instances, the favorite newsman is probably the anchorman of the station's major news effort(s) of the day. In a very real sense, he is the "star" of the show, and the element of entertainment is thus injected into news. Maury Green explains:

⁴⁸Manewith interview, June 17, 1970.

⁴⁹Land, Television and the Wired City, p. 83.

⁵⁰Wood, Electronic Journalism, p. 146.

Television news is not anonymous; it is not distributed in the nameless, faceless way of printed news. Each story wears not a byline but the man himself. Television news is reported by men and women who have faces and voices and philosophies which they cannot or will not alter. Those faces are seen on the air, those voices are heard. . . .

The indispensability of the talent exerts a constant pull on television news, steering it toward the "star system" so prevalent in the entertainment world. The star system dates back to the earliest days of the medium. . . . Television from its beginning attempted to cover all of the important news, whether or not film of every event was available. For those stories lacking visual coverage, it was necessary to present the newsman on camera, talking directly to the audience. The simple fact of such visual exposure tends to make a star, or at least a celebrity, of the newsman.⁵¹

The star system has become a part of television news. Its being good or not in a journalistic sense does not matter. "Whether or not it is good for the air person to become a star . . . for a personality to become a part of the news that is delivered--these are nevertheless the realities."⁵² The anchorman is the one person who keeps appearing throughout the show; he is the link between the news and the viewer, if not directly, then indirectly.

All of this leads to a major point when one looks at regularly scheduled, daily news programming in Chicago. The "star" system is at work in that city. It is a factor. At 10:00 p.m., the four VHF stations compete head-on and each has its "star" anchor the half hour show. On WBBM (CBS) it is

⁵¹Green, Television News, p. 43.

⁵²Wood, Electronic Journalism, pp. 41-42.

Wayne Fariss; on WMAQ (NBC) it is Floyd Kalber (possibly the most popular newsman in Chicago); on WLS (ABC) it is Fahey Flynn and Joel Daly; and on WGN, Jack Taylor anchors the news. The concern here is Taylor, but it should be kept in mind that the complexities of the star system are important factors in Chicago news programming.

Jack Taylor was named anchorman for the 5:00 and 10:00 p.m. newscasts on March 23, 1970, replacing John Drury who went to WLS-TV. Taylor has been with WGN for 12 years, joining the station as a staff announcer and later working in television news. Taylor, along with Jerry Peterson (weather), and Wendell Smith (sports), make up the news team for channel 9's major news efforts of the day.

Maury Green calls the live reporter, like Taylor, a performer and calls his performance the major element of the show.

. . . Performance is paramount; all else is secondary. This performance is likely to be successful only if it is based on broad knowledge and experience in news, but it is only through his performance that he is able to convey that knowledge and experience. He must "carry" the show while he is on, no matter what disasters occur. He must perform with ease and surety under all circumstances. . . . There are no retakes . . . his errors are broadcast for all to see, he cannot let this disturb him or upset his performance. He can never lose his cool."

He may share in the planning, he may write his own material, but when the camera tally light goes on . . . he is strictly a performer.⁵³

⁵³Green, Television News, pp. 193-194.

By these terms, Jack Taylor is a performer. He does aid in the show's planning. He does write some of his own material and he does have experience in news. He carries the show and is the one person who appears throughout. (The 10:00 p.m. show is promoted as "Jack Taylor and the News.") He performs at ease and in a relaxed manner and never seems to "lose his cool." Even though the anchorman role is relatively new to him, it appears that Jack Taylor has mastered the techniques of performance which are so important. Maury Green details these techniques:

At the same time that he is reading the script, for example, he must maintain eye contact with the camera, watch the television monitor, watch the camera tally lights, watch the stage manager for cues, anticipate second by second any problems that his reading of the script may cause for the director, time his reading of lead-ins and bridges in his mind to avoid upcuts, anticipate what he plans to do if the film breaks or other disasters occur, remember to keep his facial and body movements minimized because the camera exaggerates them, and meanwhile try to inject the properly meaningful inflection into his vocal delivery while concealing from the audience all else that he is doing.⁵⁴

Why did WGN choose Taylor? One reason was that he was already a member of the staff. According to Al Reznik, the station did entertain the notion of going outside the station for its anchorman, "but WGN, for what it is worth--and I like to believe it's worth a lot--has always followed the theory of being a big happy family, and where there's an opportunity or a possibility to promote from within, we do."⁵⁵ Perhaps

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 194.

⁵⁵Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

more crucial were other factors outlined by Reznik: "We felt that Jack Taylor was a personable, good-looking, authoritative man who had the voice, the eye contact and the ability to do the job."⁵⁶ These are qualities that both Green and Wood mention in discussing the anchorman or video reporter.

Although originally an announcer, Taylor's voice is neither pretentious nor pontifical as some announcers tend to be. He does not stutter or hesitate. His style is smooth and his delivery is relaxed. Taylor is a handsome man whose personal appearance is neat and well-groomed.

Eye contact is defined by Green as "the ability to look directly into the center of the camera lens and hold this gaze while delivering long portions of script."⁵⁷ Taylor uses both a hand script and a teleprompter although the latter is the main device used and he maintains good eye contact while using the teleprompter.

From all appearances, it seems that Taylor knows his job and has the requisite abilities to perform it successfully. He is relaxed before the camera and this "attitude is possible only if the reporter is fully prepared for his job, familiar with all the mechanics of performance, and thoroughly knowledgeable about his subject."⁵⁸ He is, in the terms of one

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Green, Television News, p. 197.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 203.

news director "'a reporter and writer who sounds good and looks good.'" ⁵⁹

Taylor is not just a news reader. The show's producer works closely with him, although in the end, the producer has the final word. Taylor does a considerable amount of writing of the international news and does his own writing on the stories he covers. Not out on daily assignment as the reporters are, Taylor does cover "news assignments in areas in which he is particularly knowledgeable. For example, when the recent controversy broke at Arlington Park race track-- Jack Taylor happens to be a very knowledgeable man in the area of thoroughbred racing--so he covered that." ⁶⁰

He also does a series that is aired on the 10:00 p.m. news called "Taylor Talks to the People" which consists mainly of man on the street interviews. This was begun in June. It was not done by his predecessor, John Drury because he was well-known in Chicago, having been a television newsman for some time. Taylor was not widely known and Al Reznik tells how the series came about: "we wanted to bring Jack closer to the people. We wanted to introduce him. We wanted to make him part of the Chicago scene and we thought this would be a good way of doing it. . . ." ⁶¹ It also gives him greater

⁵⁹Wood, Electronic Journalism, p. 145.

⁶⁰Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

⁶¹Ibid.

believability in that he does cover stories and is not just a news reader. And it is the hope of the news department to get Taylor into other areas of news coverage and reporting:

I think the dictates of the day's news are going to determine what areas he works in. . . . At the time that there was going to be the referendum for model cities, Jack Taylor, in fact, was the reporter and writer of a four part series we did on model cities in which he went out and thoroughly investigated and talked to the people involved in the specific areas in model cities and it was an extremely good job. He is capable of and is used where we can best use him.⁶²

Hiring

The news director, Charles Harrison, and the assistant news director and operations manager, Al Reznik, do the hiring of news personnel. In looking for new people, training and experience are prerequisites. The ideal, says Bob Manewith, "has a master's degree in journalism with a broadcast news major and at least two years experience in a medium size market in a combination radio and television newsroom" with experience and knowledge in film and tape editing.⁶³ This ideal is seldom found and Bob Manewith acknowledges this fact. He also believes that there are intangibles which cannot be easily measured. "A lot of it is instinct. You never know until somebody works for you whether he can do a job or not and that

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Manewith interview, June 17, 1970.

includes audition tapes and copy and everything else."⁶⁴

WGN News does not hire trainees. All of their employees have worked at other stations. There is no training program. "In this market we shouldn't have to hire trainees, so we don't," says Bob Manewith.⁶⁵ By contrast, smaller market stations must train news staffers. This is the case at WHTN-TV Huntington, West Virginia according to vice president and general manager Thomas F. Piskura:

We can't attract top talent or expect developed talent to remain for long. We look for bright young talent, good reporters. We find it in various fields. We look for good academic background, certainly college training, but rarely journalism graduates because we can't attract them. We teach film techniques here. I believe that anyone can go on the air. The importance for a reporter is to convey credibility and he does this because he has covered the story and knows it well.⁶⁶

New news personnel are given only a brief orientation to the department and the city. "Basically, we presume that if we hired them, they have been around a little bit and they don't require a great deal of briefing on how to do their job," says Bob Manewith.⁶⁷ Writers orient themselves to the city through their work and it is assumed that they are knowledgeable in the areas of film and tape editing. Cameramen are given a set of maps and for the first week, ride with other

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Broadcasting, January 5, 1970, p. 22.

⁶⁷Manewith interview, August 6, 1970.

cameramen to learn the geography of the city. Concerning reporters, Bob Manewith said: "we've yet to hire a reporter who wasn't somewhat familiar with the city. . . ." ⁶⁸

According to Al Reznik, news staffers at WGN receive salaries comparable to other news operations in the city. The writers are union and "their salaries today, although in certain levels slightly under . . . I would say are comparable" to other television news writers. ⁶⁹ The talent situation is somewhat different. Base salaries are similar to the three network owned and operated stations in the city "but because we are not a network and we don't get involved in network feeds and fees and the like. . . . I suppose one of my guys who is making \$500--if he was working for somebody else would make \$750, perhaps." ⁷⁰

Out-of-Town Bureaus

WGN Continental Broadcasting operates two out-of-town news bureaus, one in the Illinois state capital at Springfield, established in 1961, and the other in Washington, D. C., begun in 1964. The Washington bureau services the three WGN properties: WGN-AM-TV Chicago, KDAL-AM-TV Duluth, Minnesota

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

⁷⁰Ibid.

and KWGN-TV Denver. Two other stations, Corinthian Broadcasting's WISH-TV in Indianapolis and WANE-TV in Fort Wayne, Indiana, are under contract to WGN and the Washington bureau services them. In addition, the one man Washington bureau for the Bonneville International Stations shares WGN's offices and cameraman.⁷¹

According to Broadcasting, thirteen station groups maintain Washington news bureaus.⁷² Their size varies from one man (Bonneville, Capital Cities, Golden West, RKO General, Triangle, WAVE Inc.) to eighteen staffers at Westinghouse. The others (Chris-Craft, Cox, General Electric, Storer, Time-Life, WGN) have from three to seven employees. In Washington, WGN is staffed by two full-time reporters, one full-time cameraman and a secretary. The Springfield bureau is manned by one full-time reporter when the legislature is in session or for some major event such as the recent Constitutional Convention. The cameraman who works with the reporter is a local man hired on a daily basis.

The station did not say what costs are involved in operating these bureaus. Broadcasting reports that the Washington Bureau of Cox Broadcasting (seven employees), Time-Life Broadcast (five employees) and Storer Broadcasting (five

⁷¹"Why Set Up a News Bureau in Washington?" Broadcasting July 27, 1970, p. 42.

⁷²Ibid., p. 44.

employees) each run between \$150,000 and \$200,000 annually.⁷³

According to Bob Manewith, "the need to cover" is what prompted the setting up of the two bureaus.⁷⁴ The local station's news sources were thus strengthened. The wire services, tipsters, stringers and others could not provide the coverage that WGN felt it needed. "Whether or not a particular group decides to open a bureau depends primarily on whether it can get the Washington [or state capitol] coverage it wants without undertaking the special problems and expenses of a bureau."⁷⁵ Obviously, WGN thought it could not get the locally oriented coverage it wanted and needed from the wire services.

The bureaus have logistical problems which must be overcome. This is especially true in Washington. Bob Foster, who opened the Springfield bureau, is now WGN's Washington bureau chief. Covering the state legislature presented fewer physical problems than does the nation's capital, says Foster:

It's a time consuming operation I never worried about in Springfield. The problems of logistics have emerged monumental. The capitol building there houses a majority of state offices and both houses of the legislature. Other important offices are in buildings just a stone's throw away.

In Washington, concentrating on the Congress alone, there are three buildings for House members and two for members of the Senate. And the House and Senate offices are two blocks apart.⁷⁶

⁷³Ibid., p. 42.

⁷⁴Manewith interview, June 17, 1970

⁷⁵Broadcasting, July 27, 1970, p. 42.

⁷⁶Marion Purcelli, "One Down and 99 to Go," Chicago Tribune, December 27, 1964.

The out-of-town bureaus must provide material for WGN television and radio. The latter presents fewer problems in terms of getting the material to Chicago. Audio tapes or live voice reports can be fed over the telephone. But in television, there is the problem of film shipment. If the film is to be shown on the same day it is shot, it must arrive in Chicago sufficiently ahead of broadcast time. WGN ships film via Air Express--from Washington four times a day and from Springfield three to six times a day. Reznik has found that Air Express is the most efficient method.⁷⁷ Stories from Springfield and Washington are aired daily. "Absolutely daily," said Reznik. "I would say we average three Washington pieces a day and . . . probably at least a like number of Springfield pieces from our own bureau."⁷⁸ This includes radio and television broadcasts.

For the most part, the WGN bureau chiefs are on their own in that they are seldom given specific stories to cover by the home office. They check with Chicago daily and if the News Department wants something specific covered, they are either told in person or the message is relayed through their offices. "But basically," says Al Reznik, "they are their own entity."⁷⁹ If they are assigned something specific,

⁷⁷Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid.

"they will do everything possible to not only cover specifics . . . but everything that they can dig up to us which they see on the wire in Washington that is in any way or form related to Chicago."⁸⁰ In short, they must always be conscious of what the home station needs and can use. Storer Broadcasting's Washington bureau chief reiterates this point: "'We're an extension of the local newsroom. What we in Washington think we ought to supply isn't at all significant compared to what the local stations think we ought to supply.'"⁸¹ Wes Vernon, Bonneville's one man Washington bureau comments: "'The regional character of [our] coverage is all-important. When something really big is breaking on the Hill, you sometimes just have to . . . say 'forget it,' and go after frankly parochial stuff.'"⁸²

WGN's Washington and Springfield bureaus concern themselves primarily with interviews, with very little actual reporting of stories or events. This is by plan. In contrast to WGN's type of coverage, stands the eighteen man Westinghouse bureau, which also operates as a news service for many stations:

To describe what Westinghouse covers is to describe what most people instinctively describe as the news. It is in no sense a supplemental service--not on radio,

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Broadcasting, July 27, 1970, p. 43.

⁸²Ibid., p. 43.

anyway. The bureau will cover the Cooper-Church debate not only as a story that can be localized, but as national news. Or it will deal at length with the Cambodian reports that come out of the Western White House at San Clemente, Calif. Some bureaus find angles on these stories for their stations, but most would regard straight coverage of the events themselves as an exercise in redundancy.⁸³

Al Reznik is being realistic, then, when he says that "we don't have the wherewithall in either location to go out and dig up stories."⁸⁴ He went on to say:

we don't really have to, because UPI is servicing us out of Washington . . . and out of the state capitol our relationships with other independent stations are such that as stories break in that area, aside from the actual capitol doings, our reciprocal agreements go into play and we get material that way.⁸⁵

At least in Washington, the News Department has set a limited but essential objective, "to keep the five state area that we serve abreast of what their legislators are doing."⁸⁶

Because of limited manpower and because of the fact that, unlike the networks, WGN does not have carte blanche to walk into Presidential News Conferences, the Department of State or the Pentagon, the day-to-day "beat" of the Washington bureau is Capitol Hill. Investigative work is out of the question. In fact, "emphasis on Hill coverage is so pronounced that a sampling of recent stories from the . . . Cox

⁸³Ibid., p. 48.

⁸⁴Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid.

Broadcasting Bureau may be regarded as typical: In one 10-day period, no less than 75% of the bureau's stories dealt with personalities or hearings or issues in Congress."⁸⁷

Admittedly, coverage is limited. "I'd like to elaborate.

I'd like to do more there," says Al Reznik. "I hope personally, some day, to increase my Washington staff so I am able to accomplish some of these outside stories with our own personnel."⁸⁸ This opinion is echoed by two others. Carl Coleman,

assistant bureau chief for Time-Life admits that "we'd like to get off the . . . Hill more often, but it does seem to be our bread and butter."⁸⁹ Storer's Norman Waggy adds: "I hope we can begin to go a little beyond the obvious more often."⁹⁰

In the end, however, Capitol Hill provides the most material in terms of "volume of news, readily available facilities and willing sources. . . ."⁹¹ The House Radio-Television Correspondent's Gallery provides a base of operation for Washington bureau staffers such as WGN bureau chief Foster. Here he can keep up with events in both Houses and, with the aid of the wire services, can watch for something with a local or regional slant. Broadcasting details the

⁸⁷Broadcasting, July 27, 1970, p. 44.

⁸⁸Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

⁸⁹Broadcasting, July 27, 1970, p. 43.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 43.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 43.

process of the typical Capitol Hill story, an interview with a Congressman:

When the opportunity arises, a reporter arranges to have his man brought from the floor to the gallery for an interview. An example may be when, as happened last week and may happen any week, a partisan debate begins over the issue of "fiscal responsibility."

WGN's Bob Foster selects a man from his locality--Representative John B. Anderson (R-Ill.), a leader in his party as chairman of the House Republican Conference. The congressman is asked to come to the gallery and is briefed on the subject of the interview. Cameras are ready to roll, and the cameraman asks Bob Foster for a voice level. Mr. Foster happens to be preoccupied with something else at the particular moment--but Representative Anderson, obviously familiar with the scene, pipes up: "John B. Anderson, chairman of the Republican conference." Mr. Foster looks up, the cameraman nods and the interview proceeds.

Through no fault of Bob Foster's, it is not the most revealing interview ever conducted. Among the congressman's gifts is one shared by most public officials--the ability to be articulate while saying little. The reporter wants to know if Representative Anderson feels that certain specific members of Congress are displaying fiscal responsibility. "Well," says the congressman, "I don't want to get into specific names," as he proceeds to give a general description that could be linked to only a very few specific names.

The reporter wants to know if Representative Anderson shares certain specific opinions of House Minority Leader Gerald R. Ford (R-Mich.) on fiscal irresponsibility among Democrats. "Well," says the congressman, Mr. Ford's a very capable man. . . . I certainly wouldn't want to criticize anything he says." The interview concludes. . . .

The scene is repeated regularly in one form or another. Even senators are frequently brought to the House gallery because of its superior facilities.⁹²

Finally, apart from the problems and limitations mentioned earlier, bureau reporters must be alert to the fact that congressmen will "use" them and, by extension, the

⁹²Ibid., pp. 43-44.

stations they represent. Time-Life's Carl Coleman comments: "Some of these guys think the bureaus are here to do PR work for them."⁹³ It is no secret that television can be an extremely effective method of reaching the people back home or of serving one's own ends.

⁹³Ibid., p. 43.

CHAPTER III

PROGRAMMING AND AUDIENCE CONSIDERATIONS

There are other important considerations in a news department operation. Staff is most important to news but it also must be gathered from a variety of sources and presented in an acceptable format in order to attract an audience in which the advertiser might be interested. All of these things are important considerations to the WGN news department.

News Sources

Wire Services

WGN's main sources of information are the news wires, many of which are specialized and provide information concerning only one subject area. In Chicago, for example, there are local news wires which deal in local events only. A complete list of wire services are listed in Appendix A.

All wire service copy is rewritten for two reasons says author and newsman Maury Green: "(1) to condense it by distillation of its essential elements so that it will not take up so much air time, and (2) to recast it in a form and

wording more suitable for broadcast delivery."¹ According to him, it must be brief, clear and accurate. The listener-viewer has only one chance to grasp the story. He cannot go back and reread as he can with a newspaper article.

Stringers

WGN uses film and reporting stringers outside of Chicago only. One WGN film stringer has sound equipment. News tipsters are also used. A small amount of free-lance film is purchased.

In contrast, smaller news operations with fewer news personnel have to rely on an extensive stringer system. This is the case with WSM-AM-TV in Nashville, Tennessee and WHTN-TV in Huntington, West Virginia.² They have to rely on stringers because they don't have the full-time personnel to cover their areas adequately. WGN has adequate personnel to cover their market and, therefore, stringers are used only on out-of-town assignments.

Broadcast and Print Media

The local competition, both press and broadcast are monitored by the news department. Bob Manewith, former news director and now editorial director, commented on the usefulness of these sources:

¹Green, Television News, p. 30.

²Broadcasting, January 5, 1970, pp. 21-22.

Newspapers are great sources of leads on upcoming events primarily. And just as in any facet of the news business, you should know what your competition is doing, first to see if they're doing it better and second, to see what you are missing.³

Needless to say, no news department in the country is equipped and budgeted to cover all of the news in its area. Maury Green, Los Angeles newsman and author, stressed this point:

Other stations, radio news operations, and newspapers frequently "break" important stories which warrant coverage by all media. For this reason other broadcast news should be monitored regularly and all editions of the local newspapers should be purchased and scrutinized. . . . If the competitor has found something new and worthwhile to report, the story should be judged . . . on its news value.⁴

WGN feels that a story should not be ignored or passed off just because someone else discovered it.

News Staff

WGN's own staff of reporters function as news sources. In addition to those who gather news in Chicago and the surrounding area, WGN maintains bureaus in Washington, D. C. and another at the state capital of Springfield. Most of these reporters have developed contacts over the years and these serve as news sources for current and future stories.

³Manewith interview, August 6, 1970.

⁴Green, Television News, p. 32.

Weather

Each of the four Chicago VHF's have at least one professional meteorologist and each station dwells at some length on the weather during the 10 p.m. newscast. The weather is an important part of the show according to Al Reznik:

Chicago, as a matter of fact, I think is unique. Chicago is the only city . . . where a weatherman becomes a very prominent part of the newscast. In Los Angeles, for example, their weather forecast is 'well, it was 85 today and the smog was in and it will be 85 tomorrow and now back to you Joe.' We think that if we have a professional meteorologist available to us on the staff, we should give people a well balanced look at the weather and audience reaction has shown us that this is accurate.⁵

In addition, Bob Manewith feels that presenting the weather, and the sports, in some detail is an important service and that not just anybody can do it:

If you do it, you do it right. You have an accredited meteorologist. . . . You can just take the Weather Bureau's forecast if that's all you want to do, and by the same token [you] could take the ball scores off the wire if that's all we wanted to do. We have elected to do otherwise because we feel that it is a service that's appreciated.⁶

The fact that WBBM, WMAQ and WLS also use professional sports reporters and weathermen reinforces Manewith's point.

Time devoted to the weather, or sports, is not predetermined in terms of setting the lengths of these segments before the news of the day is in. An hour or two before show time,

⁵Reznik interview, September 4, 1970.

⁶Manewith interview, August 6, 1970.

particularly with the weather, the producer, after having looked at the news and deciding what he wants included in the newscast, will go to the weatherman and tell him he has "X" amount of time. The weatherman will then prepare his segment for the time limit assigned to him.⁷

Film Library

WGN maintains a film library staffed by a full-time film librarian. It is catalogued by title, person or event. Slides are kept separately and filed apart from film. Most of the slides are head shots and maps.

Other Sources

The police and fire radio bands provide additional sources and act as a tip service. Two helicopters, used mainly for radio traffic reports are used occasionally on breaking stories and for shooting aerial newsfilm. The costs are high and WGN does not have a "helicopter sitting out here all day and all night at our disposal such as . . . KTLA in Los Angeles. They have a helicopter sitting on the pad constantly," says Al Reznik, "and when something happens . . . it is gone."⁸

Other sources include various local organizations such as the Better Government Association, public relations

⁷Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

⁸Ibid.

departments of countless businesses, government offices, political parties and others. There are also network feeds for Presidential addresses which are available to independent stations for whatever out of pocket costs are involved. In addition, the city operates a rumor central and it is useful in situations such as riots.

Emergency Operations

"Perhaps nowhere is the ultimate importance of the station as an institution more visible than in its crucial role as community information and control center in time of emergency," comments the Land Report.⁹ The emergency can be the shattering experience of a presidential assassination or it can be of a more local nature, such as severe weather. In either case, human welfare is involved and many people are affected. The local station becomes an extension of the "constituted security, safety and rescue organs of the area . . . collecting and disseminating vital information that gets people to safety, keeps them away from dangerous areas, and saves human lives."¹⁰

WGN has written emergency weather procedures for television and the newsroom is directly involved. After notice

⁹Land, Television and the Wired City, p. 11.

¹⁰Wood, Electronic Journalism, p. 86.

is received from the Weather Bureau, it is taken to the director of the television show being broadcast at the time. A weather bulletin slide will be put up and an announcer will report the bulletin twice. Normal programming will be resumed. Videograph messages [supers] will be prepared and aired. Detailed procedures can be found in Appendix B.

In a speech given in 1969, Gene Filip, WGN's Manager of Public Affairs outlined what happens when a tornado is sighted and reported. He used an actual situation.¹² An Illinois State Highway Patrolman who sighted a tornado south of Chicago near Kankakee, Illinois, radioed police headquarters who then called the Chicago Weather Bureau. Keeping a direct line to the patrolman open, the Bureau began its severe weather reporting operation. In the WGN newsroom, the "hot line" rings. This is a direct telephone line to the Weather Bureau. Over this connection a Weather Bureau man informs the station that a tornado is in the area and that a series of bulletins will be moving over the weather wire. When a bulletin is completed, it is given to the radio and television announcers and a warning is broadcast. All of this takes about two minutes. In this case, only one person was killed. WGN, along with other stations and the official agencies, helped avert a greater disaster. William Wood said:

¹²Filip speech, February 18, 1969.

Many things are required to enable a broadcaster to serve effectively in this kind of emergency. It takes a careful plan in advance. . . . It takes a staff, instructed and trained so that they respond instantly and coolly. It takes confidence vested in the station by the authorities to have the necessary mutual cooperation. And above all, it takes a high degree of believability by the community in what the station says . . . so that the people the station is trying to help will trust it and participate in its effort.¹²

Budget and Costs

Covering the news can be an extremely expensive activity, especially if the station aims to provide adequate coverage in a professional journalistic manner. The amount of money spent for personnel, equipment, film, wire services and other items can be staggering. Detailed outlays and breakdowns are hard to obtain, but enough information is available to present a reasonably accurate picture of what it takes to operate a television news department. One need only look at the partial breakdown provided by Maury Green of a news operation with a budget of \$671,000 in a large eastern city (see Table 2, page 52). As a point of comparison to this large market, high budget news operation, WSM-TV in Nashville spent over \$300,000 on its news department compared with \$165,000 just five years ago. The increase was due to upgrading of equipment, larger staff and higher salaries.¹³ Smaller WHTN-TV, Huntington,

¹²Wood, Electronic Journalism, p. 114.

¹³Broadcasting, January 5, 1970, p. 21.

Table 2

Specific Costs--Selected News Budget
Items--One Station^a
(Eastern U. S., Area Population 1,000,000)

Item	Budgeted Expense (annual)
<u>Personnel:</u>	
News Director	\$ 23,000
Anchorman	46,000
Weatherman	40,000
Reporters (6)	110,000
Producer	13,000
Writer-editor-producers (4)	45,000
Clerical, etc. (3)	16,000
News film crews (3)	103,000
<u>Other:</u>	
Film (raw stock and processing)	110,000
Syndication news film	16,000
Press wire services	36,000
Line charges (telephone, cable, teletype)	4,000
Special projects	8,000
Transportation, travel, enter- tainment	<u>12,000</u>
Total budget	\$671,000

^aGreen, Television News, p. 12.

West Virginia reports its 1970 budget is \$150,000, a sharp increase over previous years.¹⁴ Higher salaries, relatively large numbers of people and high equipment costs graphically show the expense involved. News budget figures are even more impressive considering "the proportion of total program time devoted to news is comparatively low."¹⁵

The Land Report provided news operation costs on 110 stations (see Table 3, page 54). Some spent less than \$20,000 a year on news while others budgeted over \$1,000,000 and more. Thirty-two of the 110 reporting stations reported news costs between \$100,000 and \$200,000 annually, while 27 reported costs from \$200,000 to \$500,000.¹⁶ But the report points out:

the information on costs received from the stations reporting is not based on comparable data. Estimates on costs made by station managements used varying accounting procedures. It is clear . . . that in a large majority of cases, indirect costs, which are quite substantial, are not included in these estimates.¹⁷

Accounting procedures vary, and therefore figures are not really comparable. Thus the Land Report cites a city where "one station spends over \$100,000 a year on news and calls it a loss operation; a second spends over \$150,000 and breaks even; and a third spends over \$400,000 on news . . . and

¹⁴Ibid., p. 72.

¹⁵Green, Television News, p. 10.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 189.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 176.

Table 3
Costs of Television News^a
(110 Stations Reporting)

Annual Cost Range	Number of Stations
Less than \$20,000	5
\$20,000 - \$49,999	8
\$50,000 - \$99,999	21
\$100,000 - \$199,999	32
\$200,000 - \$499,999	27
\$500,000 - \$899,999	14
\$900,000 - \$999,999	-
\$1,000,000 - +	3

^aLand, Television and the Wired City, p. 189.

makes a profit."¹⁸ Their tentative conclusion: "stations that do the best job and spend the most money on news are most likely to show a profit."¹⁹

There are then some news operations that do make money. But out of these stations reporting profit and loss figures for news, 41% reported profit, 41% loss and 18% broke even.²⁰ In other words, almost 60% of the news operations in the Land survey do not return a profit.

Does the WGN News Department return a profit? As the foregoing would indicate, it is difficult to tell. Its annual budget is well over \$1,000,000²¹ (the AM news operation is included in this) and is roughly allocated the following way:

. . . About half of it goes in salary expense of one form or another--either base salaries and overtime or talent payments to people who are on the air. And about 5% or so goes for news services. About 10% goes for film and film processing and there are all sorts of various incidental expenses which are necessary to running an operation. We are charged, for example, a fixed amount every month against our budget for the building by the building department. [We are charged for] an allocation of space. But it's a budget item.²²

As to profit or loss, Manewith commented that the company's bookkeeping and accounting procedures prevent an honest answer to the question. In his own mind, he thought it did

¹⁸Ibid., p. 189.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 189.

²⁰Ibid., p. 191.

²¹Manewith interview, August 6, 1970.

²²Ibid.

run in the black: "I think it does only on the basis of the rate card--what those time periods are worth and what the expense is."²³ WGN Continental does not, as a rule break out costs so there is no way of knowing whether incoming revenue for news meets expenses. Bob Manewith says:

The company doesn't break down except for special packages, like sports, where they sell baseball as a thing and they know what baseball is going to cost for the season and know how much revenue it is going to bring in for the season because it's sold as a package. But you can no more say that news makes or loses money than you can say that [WGN radio personalities] Howard Miller or Wally Phillips does because if a customer comes in to buy time he is usually buying a package which includes spots in various parts of the day.²⁴

Manewith and Reznik stated that the News Department gets support and encouragement from the station management. The department's budget has increased every year for the last several years, part of this due to increased costs according to Al Reznik. He went on to say "we don't really have a complaint in that area, I don't think."²⁵ In his opinion, the budget is "adequate in almost every area and there are no strings attached to our having to spend money when money has to be spent." He went on to say "I personally have not had any problems with the budget. I might be questioned as to why my expenses for a given month are up \$20,000 but I usually can give them a pretty good answer."²⁶

²³Manewith interview, June 17, 1970.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

²⁶Ibid.

In setting the budget, the News Department makes a recommendation which is accepted, altered or denied by the company, in part depending on its overall financial structure. Manewith said that "we are guided pretty much by the year past, plus what we know is going to be increased such as salary increases which we know are going to happen."²⁷ These and other predictable increases are budgeted for. "You know that your costs are going to be special for [elections] or the constitutional convention as we have this year. We knew it was going to cost us extra money to cover. . . ."²⁸ In short, the cost of covering the unpredictable and unforeseen is built into the budget and future needs are taken into account. "We always put in a cushion because you never know when there is going to be a disaster or a riot or anything else which is going to require extra manpower, extra man-hours and raw material such as film."²⁹

Magazine Format

The format of television news has changed from its earlier days when the segmented show was the order of the day. This was usually a 15 minute newscast divided into segments of 5 minutes of news, 5 minutes of sports and 5 minutes

²⁷Manewith interview, August 6, 1970.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

of weather. In the early 1960's, the rigid segmented news program began to lose favor and the 30 and 60 minute newscast came into being. The magazine format and the longer news show soon became the standard. Maury Green explains:

The length was only a corollary of the format, in which the elements of the show are variable both in length and in their relative positions in the show. If the top story of the day, for example, is a sports story, sports tops the show; the viewer does not have to wait until a preset time to get a preset amount of sports (or any other) news. If a major local story justifies 25 solid minutes of coverage, it gets it.³⁰

News presentation on WGN, particularly its 10:00 p.m. show, fits this description of the magazine format. Although the show is lined up with news first, followed by weather, the sports report, more news and a weather recap, Al Reznik said that this ordering was rather arbitrary and it is altered when necessary or when the news of the day warrants a change.³¹ There is no compunction against leading off with a sports or weather story. When Chicago Cub first baseman Ernie Banks hit his 500th career home run, that story was the lead. And times for news, weather and sports are not static. If the producer determines "the news of the day warrants two minutes of weather, that's all weather will get. But if the weather of the day warrants 10 minutes, it will get 10 minutes."³²

³⁰Green, Television News, p. 9.

³¹Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

³²Ibid.

Once in a while, a newscast will go beyond its allotted time limit. Bob Manewith says, "in this market, it isn't practical because the audience is geared" to a set schedule, but nonetheless it is done.³³ It would be prompted by "some major event, something really extraordinary."³⁴ Such a decision came up late in the summer, in fact, when the ten o'clock news did go beyond its normal 30 minute length. There was a huge railroad explosion at Crescent City, Illinois. It was given lengthy coverage and the show ran over. Asked what went into the decision to expand, Manewith explained by saying, "we had good material. We don't expand frivolously, but we have the availability of doing so when the news department feels it's warranted."³⁵

Another consequence of the magazine format was the use of more than one reporter on the air. One of the first stations to use this format was KNXT in Los Angeles in 1961. Maury Green describes the show:

[The] Big News included an anchorman, an investigative reporter, a feature reporter, a sports reporter and a weatherman. In later years were added: several field reporters, three out-of-town bureau reporters, a political editor, and an entertainment reporter. But the principle remained the same. The various news stories, reported by specialists and by reporters on the scene of the event, carried greater authority because they were so reported. And the flexibility of the format,

³³Manewith interview, June 17, 1970.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Manewith interview, August 6, 1970.

combined with the changes of pace occasioned by the mere variety of faces and voices presented, almost automatically gave the news broadcast the structure of a show.³⁶

WGN's major news effort of the day fits this description of a magazine formatted show. As much as possible, the news is reported by people on the scene, by a sports reporter, by a weatherman, by an anchorman and by the bureau reporters. The format is changeable, and the faces and voices vary. Even the length of the show is not rigid.

Sponsorship

The magazine format also led to the selling of "participating spots in a news show, rather than complete or partial sponsorship."³⁷ This is true at WGN. Most sponsors buy spots, says Manewith, and there is very little direct sponsorship of news shows. While on this subject, he commented that sponsor pressure to influence the news program's content was nil. However, the station does honor the normal request of airlines to remove their spots if an air crash is reported. Other buyers of time are given the same option: "if we know we're going to have a story which they [the advertiser] might consider detrimental, we advise them or their advertising agency and give them the option of pulling the spot while the story is current."³⁸

³⁶Green, Television News, pp. 9-10.

³⁷Ibid., p. 10.

³⁸Manewith interview, June 17, 1970.

Spots give the station greater selling flexibility and it eliminates sponsor identification with particular news segments or packages. Spot selling of news

helps to separate the station "image" from the advertiser's "image" in the public mind. Inferences of advertiser influence on editorial content are harder to draw. No one advertiser is identified with most successful television news shows today. . . . Thus the news becomes more believable, and at the same time it draws more revenue.³⁹

Also, by selling spots, the show is given a smoother flow by eliminating the breaks which create the sharp endings segments inherently impose.

Schedule

The newsroom prepares five television news shows each weekday, 15 minute shows at 6:15 a.m., 1:00 p.m. and 5:15 p.m. and two half-hour shows at 10:00 p.m. and after the late movie (usually around 1:00 a.m.). This schedule generally fits the pattern found by the Land study:

Most stations offer one or two 5- or 10-minute reports in the early morning. . . . There may be a noonday newscast of from 5 to 30 minutes, a major dinnertime news roundup half-an-hour in length, a "late news" at 10 or 11 p.m. . . . and possibly a "sign-off" news following the late movie or talk show.⁴⁰

The report also states that most stations offer at least a 30 minute show as their prime news effort.⁴¹ It can be said

³⁹Green, Television News, p. 10.

⁴⁰Land, Television and the Wired City, p. 177.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 178.

now that WGN's prime news effort is the 30 minute 10:00 p.m. newscast, since the dinnertime show has been cut to 15 minutes.

Ratings

Like most stations, and especially those in very competitive markets, WGN is sensitive to the ratings. A change in the Fall, 1970, news schedule shows this. Previously, the 5:00 p.m. newscast ran a half hour. In the Fall, it ran only 15 minutes, beginning at 5:15 p.m. In February, WGN's 5:00 p.m. news with John Drury attracted 204,000 adult viewers while in May it attracted only 84,000 adults.⁴² At the end of the May rating period, Drury left WGN for WLS. However, WGN is doing well in the ratings race at 10 p.m., holding third place behind WMAQ and WLS but ahead of WBBM (for December 1969 and May 1970 ratings, see Tables 4 and 5, on pages 63 and 64 respectively).⁴³

The ratings, then, do have an effect, and the 5:15 p.m. news show reflects this. In answering a question as to why WGN is cutting back the late afternoon news, Al Reznik said:

We can go from down the list in the ratings to the top, in our opinion. . . . I'm basically a newsman [but]

⁴²Norman Mark, "Channel 9 Chilled by Ratings," Chicago Daily News, June 15, 1970.

⁴³A. C. Nielson Company, Nielson Station Index-Viewers in Profile: Chicago, Illinois, Average Weekly Television Audience Estimates, November 20 to December 17, 1969 and April 30 to May 27, 1970.

Table 4

Nielson Station Index
Weekly Estimates--Period Ending 5/27/70

Average 1/4 Hour Audiences (000)														
METRO AREA %														
	HH Rating	Current Share	HUT and Share F-M 70	DMA % HH Rating	Total HH	Total Adult Viewers	Women			Men			Total Children	
							Total	18-34	18-49	Total	18-34	18-49		
WGN														
10:00 p.m.	11	19	19	11	287	438	227	49	120	211	49	107	18	
10:15	11	19	20	11	279	413	217	46	118	196	45	99	17	
WBBM (CBS)														
10:00 p.m.	10	17	18	10	248	400	223	52	113	177	38	87	8	
10:15 p.m.	10	17	17	10	236	383	212	50	111	171	37	85	7	
WMAQ (NBC)														
10:00 p.m.	20	34	32	19	490	802	453	114	232	349	69	169	15	
10:15 p.m.	20	34	31	19	476	782	439	110	225	343	68	167	10	
WLS (ABC)														
10:00 p.m.	16	27	31	15	387	638	362	126	256	276	86	185	22	
10:15	16	27	31	15	379	626	356	130	255	270	84	180	19	
WGN:	5:00 p.m.	3	11	24										
	5:15 p.m.	9	10	23										
WBBM:	5:00 p.m.	5	18	14										
	5:15 p.m.	5	17	14										
WMAQ:	5:00 p.m.	9	31	27										
	5:15 p.m.	9	31	28										
WLS:	5:00 p.m.	9	29	25										
	5:00 p.m.	9	29	25										

Table 5
Nielson Station Index
Weekly Estimates--Period Ending 12/17/69

[illegible]

. . . I understand the reasons why we will have a tremendously increased rating for our [5:15] show when we surround it with specific types of children and adult programs that have a very great audience reaction as opposed to trying to buck the other stations--the networks--who can do more on a national-international basis. What I'm trying to say is . . . our [5:15] show could be third or fourth rated, maybe a three rating, whereas a fifteen minute [5:15 surrounded by children and adult programs] could push our [5:15] news rating from, let's say, again figures don't mean anything, from a three to a twelve. And from a purely business standpoint, the higher the rating, the more you can get for your spots.⁴⁴

WGN will program the Flintstones from 4:45 to 5:15 p.m., news from 5:15 to 5:30 p.m. and Gilligan's Island at 5:30 p.m. This type of late afternoon scheduling strategy worked as a glance at the NSI ending December 17, 1969 will show.

Bob Manewith feels that news ratings are primarily due to the lead-in, followed by the lead-out. He feels that personality is not as important as the above two factors.⁴⁵ He also said it is important to remember that news is only one part of the program day. "Programming isn't geared only to what it is going to do with the news rating, and it all fits into a pattern of the best possible programming at all times of the day, and news is just one element."⁴⁶

Audience Research

Surveys and research done specifically for the News Department--research aimed at determining what types of

⁴⁴Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

⁴⁵Manewith interview, June 17, 1970.

⁴⁶Ibid.

personalities, format etc. to which the audience would be most receptive--has not been done at WGN. The ratings, of course, give a general indication of the overall success and popularity of a program, but they do not get at the specifics of personality, format, scheduling, visuals, amount of time devoted to news, sports, weather, set and a host of others. The ratings tell only how many people are watching. They do not tell whether more people can be induced to watch, or more importantly, how they can be attracted.

The News Department is not equipped to handle research projects and neither former news director Manewith nor assistant news director and operations manager Reznik have asked that a research project be done for the news department. Mr. Reznik did mention that the news department did participate in the recent license renewal activity of determining the critical needs of the community and, obviously, some of this could be of benefit to the news department.

Reznik was asked if he would like the department to get involved in audience research:

No, I don't really think it's necessary. I think Mr. Bell invented a machine that tells us too many times a day what we are doing wrong, often times what we are doing right. I don't really think we need it. I think we are equipped with the adequate personnel to really determine what's best. And we work extremely, very close, with public relations and the programming department. Someday maybe we can use our research department for that, but at the moment it never even entered my mind.⁴⁷

⁴⁷Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

CHAPTER IV

10:00 P.M. NEWS ANALYSIS

At 10:00 p.m. Monday through Friday the three network owned and operated stations and WGN compete for the late night news audience. This is the only time they come head to head in terms of similar programming, length of program, format and local live production. Much of the stations' prestige, status and image are reflected by the ten o'clock news. How, then, do they compare in terms of news items broadcast, story length, use of visuals and time devoted to sports and weather?

A study was attempted with these questions in mind. The 10 p.m. newscasts were monitored and tape recorded. A stopwatch was used to record story and visual times. News stories were broken down into two categories, local and national/international. Sports and weather constituted separate categories. A miscellaneous category was established for such items as features, commentaries and editorials. The newscasts of the O and O's were monitored four times each on weekdays only. WGN's 10:00 p.m. show was monitored for six weekdays. The following discussion will

center on the weekday broadcasts. For detailed breakdown, see Tables 6 through 9, pages 69 through 72, respectively.

The number of news stories broadcast on the 10:00 p.m. news averaged out to about 15 per show. The low was 12 on WBBM on August 24 and the high was 21 on WLS on September 4. WGN averaged 15 news stories. On the average, there were more national stories than local ones. WGN aired 8 national stories and 7 local stories on each show. On the other hand, WMAQ had a 2 to 1 ratio of national to local.

Time devoted to news varied from WLS's 10:02 average, to WMAQ with 11:15, to WGN with 12:40 and WBBM's 12:46. However, the average time devoted to local stories was higher than that given to the national/international scene. This was in spite of the fact that the broadcasts included a greater number of national stories. WGN and WBBM each devoted over 8 minutes to local stories, on the average, and about 4.5 minutes to national ones. Only WMAQ gave more time to national news, but only slightly more.

The average news story length varied considerably. WBBM had more time per story (about 55 seconds) than the other three stations. WLS was the lowest with about 35 seconds per story. An average WGN story lasted 51 seconds. In all cases, however, the average time for a local story was far greater than the average time for a national story. Two stations, WGN and WBBM, averaged over one minute for each local story. WMAQ averaged almost one minute while WLS devoted

Table 6

WBBM (CBS)--10:00 P.M. News

	Average	8/19	8/20	8/24	8/26
No. of News Stories	14	15	13	12	16
No. of Local Stories	6.5	6	6	7	7
No. of National Stories	7.5	9	7	5	9
Total News Time	12:46	15:28	11:41	12:24	11:29
Total Local News Time	8:19	8:55	9:17	8:51	6:13
Total National News Time	4:27	6:33	2:24	3:33	5:16
Average Time Per News Story	:55.3	1:02	:54	1:02	:43
Average Time Local Story	1:19	1:29	1:33	1:16	:53
Average Time National Story	:35.5	:43	:21	:43	:35
Total Time for Sports	3:51	3:40	3:32	3:48	4:23
Total Time for Weather	2:27	2:27	2:21	2:26	2:35
Miscellaneous Time	2:25	0	4:12	2:48	2:38
Miscellaneous No. of Items	1:0	0	2	1	1
Total Time All Visuals	10:53	12:21	11:09	9:56	10:08
Total Time Visuals--News	7:27	9:56	6:41	7:16	4:55
Total Time Visuals--Sports	2:35	2:25	2:30	2:40	2:45
Total Time Visuals--Misc.	1:07	0:00	1:58	0:00	2:28
No. of News Stories Using Visuals	7.0	8	8	7	5
No. of Stories Using Film	4.75	5	5	6	3
No. of Local Stories Using Film	3.5	3	4	5	2
No. of National Stories Using Film	1.25	2	1	1	1
Total Film Time--News	5:52	7:57	5:47	7:04	2:38
Total Film Time--Local News	4:20	4:49	5:35	5:07	1:47
Total Film Time--National News	1:32	3:08	:12	1:57	:51
Lead Story		Local	Local	Nat'l	Local

Table 7

WMAQ (NBC) --10:00 P.M. News

	Average	8/27	8/28	9/1	9/2
No. of News Stories	15	15	15	15	16
No. of Local Stories	5.25	6	4	5	6
No. of National Stories	10.25	9	11	10	10
Total News Time	11:15	11:31	12:50	10:19	10:19
Total Local News Time	5:23	7:02	5:31	4:35	4:22
Total Nat'l News Time	5:52	4:29	7:19	5:44	5:57
Average Time per News Story	:44.3	:46	:51	:41	:39
Avg. Time Local Story	:58.8	1:10	1:06	:55	:44
Avg. Time Nat'l Story	:35	:30	:40	:34	:36
Total Time for Sports	3:48	3:38	4:02	3:51	3:40
Total Time for Weather	3:28	3:23	3:30	3:25	3:31
Miscellaneous Time	2:12	2:26	:25	2:55	3:02
Miscellaneous No. of Items	1.25	2	1	1	1
Total Time All Visuals	8:00	9:44	9:45	6:08	6:22
Total Time Visuals--News	6:06	6:27	8:05	5:00	4:50
Total Time Visuals--Sports	1:36	2:02	1:40	1:08	1:32
Total Time Visuals--Miscl.	:18.8	1:15	0:00	0:00	0:00
No. of News Stories Using Visuals	7.0	8	7	7	6
No. of Stories Using Film	6.0	7	6	6	5
No. of Local Stories Using Film	3.25	5	3	3	2
No. of Nat'l Stories Using Film	2.75	2	3	3	3
Total Film Time--News	5:45	6:18	7:07	4:51	4:42
Total Film Time--Local News	3:21	4:45	3:29	2:55	2:13
Total Film Time--National News	2:24	1:33	3:37	1:56	2:29
Lead Story		Local	Local	Nat'l	Nat'l

Table 8

WLS (ABC)--10:00 P.M. News

	Average	9/3	9/4	9/8	9/9
No. of News Stories	17.5	17	21	15	17
No. of Local Stories	7.3	8	7	7	7
No. of National Stories	10.0	9	14	8	10
Total News Time	10:02	10:17	11:51	9:40	8:18
Total Local News Time	5:29	5:28	6:52	5:07	4:30
Total Nat'l News Time	4:32	4:49	4:59	4:33	3:48
Average Time per News Story	:34.8	:36	:34	:39	:30
Average Time Local Story	:45.8	:41	:59	:44	:39
Average Time Nat'l Story	:27.5	:32	:21	:34	:23
Total Time for Sports	4:45	4:10	4:03	4:49	5:58
Total Time for Weather	3:10	3:04	3:10	3:10	3:18
Miscellaneous Time	2:37	3:32	1:40	3:08	3:08
Miscellaneous No. of Items	2.0	3	1	2	2
Total Time All Visuals	9:24	9:47	7:46	10:04	9:58
Total Time Visuals--News	5:58	6:25	6:40	6:11	4:36
Total Time Visuals--Sports	2:23	1:50	1:06	2:40	3:57
Total Time Visuals--Misc.	1:03	1:32	0:00	1:13	1:25
No. of News Stories Using Visuals	9.3	9	10	10	8
No. of Stories Using Film	5.5	5	6	6	5
No. of Local Stories Using Film	4.0	3	5	4	4
No. of Nat'l Stories Using Film	1.5	2	1	2	1
Total Film Time--News	4:45	5:26	5:08	5:02	3:24
Total Film Time--Local News	3:21	3:17	4:38	3:05	2:22
Total Film Time--National News	1:25	2:09	:30	1:57	1:02
Lead Story		Local	Local	Local	Nat'l

Table 9

WGN--10:00 P.M. News

	Average	8/11	8/12	8/13	8/14	8/17	8/18
No. of News Stories	15	14	19	13	14	18	13
No. of Local Stories	7	7	8	8	6	6	7
No. of National Stories	8.2	7	11	5	8	12	6
Total News Time	12:40	13:44	13:06	11:52	11:46	13:02	12:30
Total Local News Time	8:18	10:06	6:34	9:57	5:45	7:44	9:43
Total National News Time	4:22	3:38	6:32	1:55	6:01	5:18	2:47
Average Time per News Story	:51	:59	:41	:55	:50	:43	:58
Average Time Local Story	1:12	1:27	:50	1:15	:58	1:17	1:23
Average Time National Story	:31.7	:31	:36	:23	:45	:27	:28
Total Time for Sports	4:40	5:51	5:15	4:35	4:25	4:22	3:33
Total Time for Weather	4:55	4:42	4:54	4:25	5:05	4:52	5:32
Miscellaneous Time	1:04	0:00	0:00	3:22	0:00	0:00	3:00
Miscellaneous No. of Items	.33	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total Time All Visuals	10:06	10:50	8:31	12:51	9:15	7:51	11:19
Total Time Visuals--News	7:14	8:01	6:19	7:47	6:52	6:07	8:19
Total Time Visuals--Sports	1:48	2:49	2:12	1:42	2:23	1:44	0:00
Total Time Visuals--Miscellaneous	1:04	0:00	0:00	3:22	0:00	0:00	3:00
No. of News Stories Using Visuals	8.7	8	10	9	9	7	9
No. of Stories Using Film	6.3	5	7	7	7	6	6
No. of Local Stories Using Film	4.7	4	5	6	4	4	5
No. of National Stories Using Film	1.67	1	2	1	3	2	1
Total Film Time--News	6:33	6:52	5:32	7:22	6:20	5:44	7:29
Total Film Time--Local News	5:09	6:03	3:46	6:49	3:07	4:11	6:58
Total Film Time--National News	1:24	:49	1:46	:33	3:13	1:33	:31
Lead Story		Nat'l	Nat'l	Nat'l	Nat'l	Local	Local-Weather

about 45 seconds for each local item. For all stations, the average time for a national story was about 30 seconds.

WGN and WLS each devoted about 4:40 to sports while WBBM and WMAQ hovered around the 3:50 mark. WGN far outdistanced the other stations in terms of time given to weather. On the average, WGN aired almost 5 minutes of weather. This included their weather recap given at the end of each program.

WBBM's 10:00 p.m. news was the most "visual" show with almost 11 minutes of film, slides and drawings. Such things as ball scores given over a slide are not included. WGN had about 10 minutes of visuals while WLS had 9.5 minutes and WMAQ used 8 minutes of visuals. Weather visuals are excluded here unless a weather story was part of the news. Only visuals used in the news, sports and miscellaneous categories were included.

Film was the main type of visual used. WGN led in average total film time for news (6:33) and also in total film time devoted to local news (5:09). All stations used more locally oriented footage than film used in national items. This is what accounts for the greater time given to local stories even though local stories are outnumbered by national ones.

Another study, reported in the May, 1970 issue of the Chicago Journalism Review, carried results of a somewhat similar but less comprehensive study. Each of the four stations had their 10:00 p.m. newscasts monitored on Monday,

April 16. This study was concerned mainly with how each station handled the news of the day; which stories were aired and which were not; if the same stories were included on two or more stations, how were they handled, and what information was given, i.e., were all the significant facts included? The study revealed some of the same types of information which were gathered for this research.¹

	<u>WMAQ</u>	<u>WLS</u>	<u>WBBM</u>	<u>WGN</u>
Minutes of news and comment	13:05	13:15	14:35	11:40
Minutes of weather, sports, stocks	6:35	6:00	5:35	8:40
Number of news stories	11	15	15	12
Average length	1:00	0:45	0:58	0:58

Since the CJR survey was a one day study, certain biases are inherent, but in general the results of both studies are similar if not exactly the same.

¹"Less is More: the Big Story Runs 0:58," Chicago Journalism Review, May, 1970, pp. 12-13.

CHAPTER V

EDITORIALS

Television editorials are not a new element in Chicago's broadcasting history. They were aired on some stations in the early 1960's, but only during the last several years have they become a genuinely significant part of Chicago television. The editorials broadcast are not an individual's expression of opinion, but the point of view of a broadcast organization as expressed through a spokesman. The editorial is the opinion of the station's management. Furthermore, it is the station, not a network or station group that does the editorializing. Author William Wood explains:

The labeled editorial is a broadcast station phenomenon. Instances at the national network level are few, and at this time none of the networks show signs of assuming the editorial as a regular responsibility. The networks rationalize this by saying that to editorialize would be to speak through the transmitters of hundreds of affiliated stations whose owners might not hold the same editorial view and to communities whose traditions, attitudes and problems vary too greatly on many subjects to allow the common application of one point of view. These are the very things which make the individual stations the natural place for editorials, and that is where they are found.¹

¹Wood, Electronic Journalism, pp. 61-62.

Why does the local station editorialize? William Wood cites a 1966 National Association of Broadcasters survey which revealed that television stations editorialize "to exert community responsibility and leadership; to enhance their reputations as reliable news media; to attract and build a larger audience; to comply with recommendations of the FCC or the NAB, and to reflect staff and management attitudes."² Also, one other reason might be to keep up with the competition. Each station has its own rationale for airing editorials, but the reasons cited cover most of the territory.

Stations that editorialize take on the responsibility of following certain rules spelled out by the FCC, as embodied in the Fairness Doctrine:

The fairness doctrine deals with the . . . question of affording reasonable opportunity for the presentation of contrasting viewpoints on controversial issues of public importance. . . . The licensee, in applying the fairness doctrine, is called upon to make reasonable judgments in good faith on the facts of each situation--as to whether a controversial issue of public importance is involved, as to what viewpoints have been or should be presented, as to the format and spokesmen to present the viewpoints, and all other facets of such programming.³

Most observers would agree that a majority of television editorials do not involve controversial issues or take controversial stands. This is as true in Chicago as anywhere else.

²Ibid., p. 63.

³Political Broadcast Catechism and the Fairness Doctrine (Washington: National Association of Broadcasters, 1966), p. 26.

But the four Chicago stations that do editorialize carry rebuttals. In fact, they encourage the airing of varying or opposite opinions.

Inasmuch as all four Chicago VHF stations editorialize (the UHF's do not), it might be useful at this point to look at each separately, with special emphasis, of course, on WGN.

WGN

WGN began editorializing in November, 1969. The editorials represent WGN Continental Broadcasting Company, but they are not aired at the WGN stations in Denver and Duluth.

There does not appear to be any one concrete reason why WGN began to editorialize. Two other stations in the city had been editorializing for several years, but Editorial Director Bob Manewith denies that this is why his station started.⁴ The idea, he said, had been considered for years and the news department was also behind the idea. Ward L. Quaal, President of WGN Continental is quoted in Broadcasting as saying: "We made this move in 1969 after many years of producing editorial documentaries. . . . With our knowledgeable news staff, together with our stations' expert research personnel and facilities, we felt we were ready to present our own editorial viewpoint."⁵ In addition to this, Bob Manewith

⁴Manewith interview, June 17, 1970.

⁵"In Chicago They Slug It Out Editorially," Broadcasting, June 1, 1970, p. 45.

stated it was an area in which the station was not providing the service it should.⁶

WGN established an editorial board to choose subjects and decide what position the station would take. It meets at least once a week with other meetings scheduled as needed. Included on the board are: editorial director Bob Manewith; vice president and manager of news Bruce Dennis; vice president and manager of public affairs Alexander C. Field Jr.; James Hanlon, vice president and manager of public relations and advertising and Daniel Calibraro, vice president and assistant to the president.

The editorial department is a separate entity consisting of two people and it is not a part of the news department. Mr. Manewith is aided by "a combination assistant (she has a degree in journalism and I am making use of it) and secretary. The assistance comes in the form of research, some writing and some production."⁷ The actual writing of the editorials is done by various people. Mr. Manewith and Frank Hart of public relations do many of them. The sports editor did one and so did news reporter Nina Herrmann. Members of the editorial board write a few, although their other responsibilities usually preclude them from taking time to research a subject.

⁶Manewith interview, August 6, 1970.

⁷Letter from Robert Manewith, Editorial Director, WGN Chicago, September 15, 1970.

The on camera editorial spokesman is Orion Samuelson, the station's farm service director. Bob Manewith explains the selection: "We just looked through all the people available and management decided that it did not want to appear on the air. I don't know what its reasons were. I felt that Ward Quaal would have been ideal. He is a dynamic speaker and he is the president of the company, but he didn't want to do it."⁸ Also, on occasion, Mr. Samuelson writes an editorial.

Editorials are aired Saturday through Tuesday and are repeated several times, but the number of times each runs "varies with the number we prepare during a given period and the number, if any, of rebuttals we are going to air. The norm would be four times, however."⁹ The number of repetitions also varies due to pre-emptions mainly caused by WGN's prolific sports broadcasts. Bob Manewith cited the following example:

we very often follow the ten o'clock news on Saturday night with an editorial. We didn't have a ten o'clock news last Saturday night because the Cubs were playing in Los Angeles and we had a ten o'clock ballgame. So we didn't have [an editorial] on Saturday night at that time.¹⁰

In any case, the normal schedule calls for editorials at 6:27 a.m. Saturday through Tuesday following the 6:15 a.m.

⁸Manewith interview, June 17, 1970.

⁹Manewith letter, September 15, 1970.

¹⁰Manewith interview, June 17, 1970.

newscast, 9:48 a.m. Monday and Tuesday during the Jim Conway Show, 2:28 p.m. Monday and Tuesday following the Mike Douglas Show, 10:27 p.m. Saturday and Sunday following the 10:00 p.m. news, and at approximately 12:50 a.m. Monday and Tuesday after the late movie.¹¹ Editorials usually are about two minutes in length.

Most editorials appear with a cartoon or other visuals as warranted. For example, one editorial was a anti-litter message. Pictures of trash and garbage were shown while America the Beautiful was played in the background. Another style was used during the station-wide campaign against drug abuse aired April 26 through May 2. According to Bob Manewith, speakers were invited to give guest editorials while programming and news during the week placed emphasis on the drug problem.

Audience response to the editorials varies in both volume and attitude. Mr. Manewith says it varies with the editorial but that it is usually favorable when a viewer expresses an opinion. Most of the time, however, it is non-descriptive, usually being a request for a copy of the editorial without an "I like it or didn't like it."¹²

Most WGN editorials concentrate on local or regional issues. The station, though a corporate part of the

¹¹Manewith letter, September 15, 1970.

¹²Manewith interview, August 6, 1970.

Tribune Company which publishes the Chicago Tribune and Chicago Today, is operated separately from the newspaper division. Subject matter for editorials usually differs from the newspapers', and if the same topics are treated, the opinions expressed may differ.

Finally, Editorial Director Manewith stated that the station will air editorials, even if the subject matter comes into conflict with a sponsor and that WGN has not lost any sponsors because of its editorial stands.¹³

WBBM (CBS)

WBBM was the first Chicago station to televise editorials, the first being aired in the early 1960's. It began daily editorials on March 12, 1962. The editorial department is staffed by three people. Richard Westerkamp is the editorial director and the on-air editorial spokesman.

Like the other stations in Chicago that editorialize, WBBM has an editorial board that meets weekly. The board considers topics but does not decide on position. This decision is made by Leon Drew, vice president of CBS and general manager of WBBM-TV.¹⁴ Besides Messrs. Drew and Westerkamp, the board includes the program director, the

¹³Manewith interview, June 17, 1970.

¹⁴Broadcasting, June 1, 1970, p. 44.

director of community relations and the director of promotion and information services. Most topics concern local issues and WBBM is the only one of the four stations which will endorse a local or state political candidate.

Editorials are aired six days a week, Monday through Saturday. Monday, Wednesday and Friday they are aired at 5:55 p.m. at the end of an hour of local news and immediately preceding CBS News with Walter Cronkite. On Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, editorials are aired at 10:25 p.m. after the 10:00 p.m. news.

WMAQ (NBC)

WMAQ began to editorialize soon after NBC gave the authorization to its owned and operated stations early in 1970. Bob Smith is the editorial director and on-camera spokesman. Editorials are cleared through Robert Lemon, NBC vice president and general manager of WMAQ-TV. Editorial director Smith reports directly to him. Besides these two, the editorial board includes the WMAQ-TV station manager, the director of news for NBC Chicago, the station's program manager and the writer-researcher of the editorial department. Mr. Lemon chairs the board.

WLS (ABC)

WLS first ran its editorials in 1963 at the rate of three each month. Each successive year, the number of editorials has increased, 29 in 1964, 43 in 1965, 43 in 1966,

73 in 1967, over 80 in 1968 and 119 in 1969.¹⁵ They are almost exclusively locally oriented. The editorial director, Con O'Dea, is the only person in the department. He sits on the editorial board along with John C. Severino, vice president and general manager of WLS-TV, the news director, the program director, the promotion director and the administrative assistant to Mr. Severino.

On the average, each editorial is run six times per week and each is approximately one minute and 30 seconds in length.¹⁶ The schedule is staggered: Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m., 4:00 p.m. and 1:30 a.m.; Saturday, 1:30 p.m., 3:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m.; Sunday, 2:50 p.m., 11:00 p.m. and 1:30 a.m. Mr. Severino airs the editorials.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁶Letter from Con O'Dea, Editorial Director, WLS Chicago, October 15, 1970.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The importance of television news in this country's information network has grown to the point where today it is the main source of news for a majority of Americans and it is also the most believable source. This has been documented by a long range study conducted by Roper Research Associates, Inc.¹ (see Table 10, page 85). This public emphasis on television news places the news department in the position of station image maker, and when one is playing the ratings game for audience and revenue, the importance of the news department is magnified. Author William Wood comments: "Whether a station is owned by a network, affiliated with a network, or independent, and whatever national news programs it may carry . . . what gives each station its individuality is the news job it does with its own hands."² Norman Mark,

¹Roper, A Ten-Year View, pp. 3-4.

²Wood, Electronic Journalism, p. 111.

Table 10
Roper Survey of News^a

	1959	1961	1963	1964	1967
	-----percent-----				
<u>Most want to keep</u>					
Television	42	42	44	49	53
Newspapers	32	28	28	27	26
Radio	19	22	19	15	14
Magazines	4	4	5	5	3
Don't know or no answer	3	4	4	4	4
<u>Source of most news</u>					
Television	51	52	55	58	64
Newspapers	57	57	53	56	55
Radio	34	34	29	26	28
Magazines	8	9	6	8	7
People	4	5	4	5	4
Don't know or no answer	1	3	3	3	2
(Multiple answers accepted; column totals therefore exceed 100%)					
<u>Most believable</u>					
Television	29	39	36	41	41
Newspapers	32	24	24	23	24
Magazines	10	10	10	10	8
Radio	12	12	12	8	7
Don't know or no answer	17	17	18	18	20

^aRoper, A Ten-Year View, pp. 3-5.

television-radio writer for the Chicago Daily News, also emphasized this thought, relating it to the 10:00 p.m. news race in Chicago:

The news program is everything for the station. I didn't realize this--how important that that 10:00 p.m. news race is. Your ratings in the 10:00 p.m. news and the fee that you charge per minute spot on the 10:00 p.m. news seems to be reflected through the schedule. If you are number one at ten, you somehow tend to be number one in other places, too. It may be that because you are number one you have to have such a heads-up organization that you do heads-up things the rest of the day. It's the whole prestige of the station. It's one of the very few times when you have live, local production.³

News presentation and how a station is perceived by the public are closely related because it is one of the few areas where a station has direct control over what is aired. Network owned and operated stations and affiliates are pretty well locked in to what the network offers. Even an independent like WGN, to fill its program day, must broadcast syndicated shows and movies, programs over which it has no content or production control. It is then the locally produced shows which give a station its own individual character. This is why the 10:00 p.m. news in Chicago is so competitive and so important. All four VHF stations compete head-on with a locally produced, live, 30 minute broadcast. Here the stations, not the news departments, compete against each other. The daily news program is important.

³Interview with Norman Mark, Television-Radio writer, Chicago Daily News, August 21, 1970.

The stations, however, are not competing in terms of what news or stories are presented. It is hoped that all stations present what they feel are the significant stories of the day. Rather they are competing in presenting a show, and a show, any show, to be successful, must attract and hold the attention of the audience. "That is exactly the aim of a television news show," says newsman-author Maury Green. "It must be a calculated blend of news and personality, presented in a pattern designed to hold the attention and interest of the audience."⁴ Television is entertainment and the most entertaining shows, in the broadest sense of the term, build audience. The vehicle which accomplishes this is the show and thus the television newsman must "think of the total broadcast not as a collection of news stories but as a show, the primary purpose of which is to convey the news."⁵

What then is the major news effort of WGN like? What are its strong points and what should be done to improve it? The main concern here is the 10:00 p.m. news since it is the major effort of the day and it can be compared to similar news shows of equal length aired at the same time.

⁴Green, Television News, p. 45.

⁵Ibid., p. 45.

Recommendations

1. The magazine format has been discussed. Its flexibility allows for changes when they are deemed necessary. The magazine format also allows the station to lead with its strength, and in WGN's case, this is sports. The Cubs, Black Hawks and Bulls are carried by WGN and the station does an excellent job of covering the teams. Their cameramen are excellent and rarely miss a key play. Why not lead off with videotape highlights when the teams play? It can't be done everyday, obviously, and maybe it would only be a tease for the sports later in the show. It would be going with your strength and that is what is needed. WGN is admittedly at a disadvantage in covering the news, so something distinctive is needed to set WGN apart from the O and O's.

While WGN has the best sports tapes in the city, the sports reporting on the newscasts is dull. It should be the strongest part of the show considering the material they have to work with. They also seem to cover fewer stories than the other stations' sports reports at 10:00 p.m. "They don't cover much," says critic Norman Mark. "They don't get behind the scenes. They're promoters [of the teams] rather than reporters. They get out there and stick a microphone in front of a player and talk for a few minutes and call that a sports report. It isn't."⁶ A reporter needs to be critical

⁶Mark interview, August 21, 1970.

when criticism is called for. Jack Brickhouse covers the Cubs for WGN but he is also on that teams board of directors. Wendell Smith, who usually does the sports at 10:00 p.m., is just not very forceful or lively. There is very little analysis of sports and very little commentary. Since sports is one of the few things a majority of the people enjoy and can identify with, it attracts people. A more forceful sports report could attract more viewers. And as Norman Mark says, "analysis means the good and the bad. You are calling the shots truthfully."⁷ The point is that something should be done to exploit what should be the strongest part of the show. The sports reporters on the other stations--Brent Musberger on WBBM, Johnny Morris on WMAQ and Bill Frink on WLS--all seem to cover more sports areas and do a better job at looking at things critically.

2. The "Taylor Talks to the People" series was a most intelligent decision. The administrators involved realized correctly that some vehicle was needed to make Taylor known as a person and as a newsman. The fact that he comes in contact with people and is out on the street in a newsman's capacity makes him a more credible and believable news source. It should be continued. The man on the street aspect also has promotional possibilities, especially since WGN bills itself as "Chicago's Own Television Station."

⁷Ibid.

The series itself concentrates on asking the views of the general public and what better way to get people to view your show than to have themselves, their friends and neighbors on television?

3. WGN's 10:00 p.m. news has the three major participants ad-lib exchanges in which anchorman Jack Taylor brings on weatherman Jerry Peterson who in turn brings on whoever is doing sports. There is nothing wrong with this if it is done in a professional manner. They are trying for an informalness and a repartee, but it does not seem to accomplish the desired effect. The performers joke around and it appears clumsy and amateurish. There is nothing worse than humor that fails. It destroys the believability of the airmen as authorities in their respective fields. WLS also uses this "happy talk" approach, but they are more skilled at it. This may be because they have been at it longer and because their airmen are stronger personalities and can bring it off.

4. WGN teases each section of the news. Operations manager Al Reznik said it is done for no other reason than to act as an "audience catcher."⁸ It is a vocal lead-in followed by the commercial. Some examples:

- "The middle east powder keg continues to smoke despite the cease fire. Details after this message." 8/11/70

⁸Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

- "Serious crimes have increased dramatically in the last decade. More on that after this message."
8/12/70
- "A summer outing turns to tragedy for a suburban group of Chicago youngsters. Details in a moment."
8/17/70

The weather tease is usually something like, "Jerry Peterson and his complete look at the Chicago weather right after this message." There is also a tease of the sports by the sports reporter.

Maury Green argues that this type of vocal lead-in is "offensive to the more discerning viewer, who does not appreciate being 'talked down to.'" He goes on to say that the audience is not "so collectively stupid as to think the show is over. . . ."⁹ Mr. Green, though, overstates his case. If the managers and producers feel that this type of tease will help the show, then there is nothing wrong in using it. Many stations do it without apparent harmful effects. However, it should not degrade the quality of the newscast. On WGN, the teases are usually of an urgent or sensational nature. Apparently, the station is playing up the sensational, possibly feeling that this is a good way to hold the viewer through the commercial. However, if the product is good, the viewer will stay through the commercial. Besides those already mentioned, others used in an eight day period include:

⁹Green, Television News, p. 24.

- "An Illinois congressman says the Russians have taken advantage of the middle east cease fire. A filmed report in 60 seconds." 8/14/70
- "The stupidity of drag racing on public streets made itself evident again last night. I'll have a filmed report in just 60 seconds." 8/15/70
- "Evening rush hour traffic was hopelessly snagged on the Dan Ryan expressway tonight by a multiple fatal crash. A filmed report after this message." 8/18/70

5. The news set used by WGN is what appears to be a long desk with Jack Taylor at one end, Wendell Smith, or whoever is doing sports, at the other end. Centered in the back of this are the weather maps and dials. The weatherman works standing up. Critic Norman Mark comments:

They are trying for a repartee but . . . Wendell is on one side of the world and Taylor is at the other and Petersen is in the middle. It seems just huge. On channel 7 [WLS] it looks like they [Flynn-Daly] are sitting right close to each other. . . . at least they are together. Here [WGN] they pull back for a shot where they are laughing at each other or at some joke . . . and it looks like they are in different worlds.¹⁰

The set was at least partially designed to facilitate the ad-lib, informal atmosphere. If this is to remain part of the show, and no doubt it will, then the participants should appear in closer physical proximity to each other.

6. The establishment of two out-of-town bureaus demonstrates that WGN is not in the news business just because the FCC says it should be. Former news director, and now editorial director, Bob Manewith says that the station is

¹⁰Mark interview, August 21, 1970.

"motivated by a sincere desire to inform" and that news is not aired just because it is a necessity."¹¹ However, the two bureaus, particularly the one in Washington, could be used to greater advantage. The Washington bureau deals mainly in interviews because it does not have the resources in terms of manpower and money to go after other stories which still fit within the local/regional boundary the station has set for the bureau. A little more digging for stories about Illinois would increase tremendously the stature of the bureau, and the stories themselves would become more interesting and meaningful thus making WGN News a greater attraction. This would be the first step--more stories about Illinois and Chicago and less routine interviews.

The second step would be to allow Washington bureau reporters to do commentary on local and national items. It would provide an alternative to the viewpoints of the networks and the owned and operated stations. A greater public service would be provided.

However, an expansion of the news service requires the complete backing of station management and, ultimately, on its determination of the importance, necessity and feasibility of such a move.

¹¹Manewith interview, June 17, 1970.

7. Since WGN appears to be going with the informal approach to news, it might add to the effect if people were brought into the studio to answer a few questions. It may not always work, but at the very least it would set WGN's 10:00 p.m. news apart from the others on at the same time, adding uniqueness to the show. It does not have to be the top newsmakers of the day, nor must it deal in hard news. Figures from the local academic, scientific, sports, business and cultural worlds could provide the material for short but interesting features. For that matter, they could also be filmed. With only 30 minutes available for the whole show, one can not do much, but if the 5 minute weather forecast and the joking around were cut down, two or three minutes could be added to the news portion of the show.

8. It seems that one of the measures of a station's confidence in its own news department is to allow its newsmen to do commentary and analysis. WGN should do analysis and commentary. The other Chicago stations do this and do it successfully. Joel Daly who shares the WLS news spot with Fahey Flynn, does a commentary every night. Walter Jacobson on WBBM often does commentary and Len O'Connor of WMAQ not only does personal commentary but digs out his own stories. The only analysis regularly aired on WGN is of the weather.

9. The main weather report and the weather recap take up 5 minutes of each 10:00 p.m. newscast. This is much too long. It may be that Chicagoans are interested in the weather, but

some of the time could be put to better use. Features, commentary, live interviews and editorials could make the show livelier, more interesting and give it a unique character of its own. At most, three minutes should be devoted to the weather and if it is of a nature to require that much coverage, then possibly it should lead off the show. Since WGN has nobody who really stands out like Flynn and Daly of WLS or WMAQ's Floyd Kalber and Len O'Connor, the station should try to do something different so that people, in some way, can identify with WGN News.

10. Whether the audience would accept any of the proposed changes is anybody's guess. And here lies another problem. The station really does not know what people want in terms of news format, style and personalities. Professional journalistic responsibilities do not have to be sacrificed in trying to make a newscast more appealing to the public. Would they like to see more features? What about less weather? Would lively commentary attract people? The fact is that the answers to these and other questions are not known. Letters and phone calls to the station do not provide enough accurate information. What is needed is some sort of systematic research into the questions of who the viewer wants, what the viewer wants, and how they want to see television news presented. WGN may find that it is doing many things right. If this be the case, they could work on strengthening those areas. But the fact that they are third in the market and not second

or first indicates that they are not doing everything right. Audience research could not hurt and it might help immensely. It may turn up something viewers would like to see which is not presently being done on any newscast. WGN could then point to itself and say, rightfully, "this is what WGN is doing to be creative and this is what you asked to see."

11. Most television editorials, in the words of Chicago Sun-Times television-radio writer Ron Powers, "are equivocal, vaguely worded and preoccupied with matters that are of relatively minor significance to the total community."¹² If they do deal with significant matters, concrete proposals or alternatives are rarely included. Taking this into account, it is not surprising to see television critic Clarence Peterson of the Chicago Tribune comment as follows:

Unhappily, the public does not seem to care much about television editorials. To judge by the mail I receive, there is a deep and abiding interest in television news but hardly any interest at all in television editorials.

Perhaps viewers do not take editorials very seriously--and why should they? Television editorials are not often informative; they almost never lead the viewer down any new avenues of thought. Even those that are well written and closely reasoned tend to be predictable and, inevitably, dull.

To get people thinking, you've got to get their attention and hold it. Television editorials rarely do either.¹³

¹²Ron Powers, "TV Stations Applaud Their Own Editorials," Chicago Sun-Times, October 3, 1970.

¹³Clarence Petersen, "Are Broadcast Editorials Really Worth the Bother," Chicago Tribune, August 23, 1970.

It is commendable that WGN has seen fit to editorialize but it would seem that their editorials fit the description set forth by Mr. Peterson. Most deal in generalities and support things to which few people would object. For example:

- "A Salute to Roosevelt University" aired May 30-June 2.
". . . we feverently wish for the final achievement of Roosevelt University's goal of fellowship and understanding between all Americans."
- "Smith-Stevenson" aired June 7.
the public should demand "an actual confrontation between Senator Ralph Smith and Treasurer Adlai Stevenson."
- "Transit Aid" aired June 13-June 16.
"If the CTA gets no aid, its management says fares will go up and service will go down. The members of the General Assembly should consider this latter probability carefully."
- "Draft Reform" aired June 20-June 23.
"We know that many men of draft age are studying and re-studying the Supreme Court decision [on conscientious objectors]. Some of them will use it to their benefit; other will try. We feel it is wrong, however, for these people to avoid service to their country when that service is in a form to which no one can conscientiously object."

It is this type of editorial which is so prevalent and which Chicago Daily News critic Norman Mark terms "very soft."¹⁴
Concrete proposals should be made if the situation calls for them. This would mean more research but it would be more helpful to air one constructive editorial than several which do nothing. This does not mean that other "softer" types of editorials should be discontinued. There just ought to be more balance.

¹⁴Mark interview, August 21, 1970.

To reach more people with their editorials, they should be aired during the 10:00 p.m. newscast on weekdays. As critic Clarence Petersen says, "more Chicagoans are looking for news and commentary at 10:00 p.m. than are looking for anything else on television at any other time of day."¹⁵ Scheduling is the program departments area of concern, but Al Reznik has asked that "editorials be scheduled adjacent to news because the audience will be more receptive to them and they will tie in more, because they do tie in hand in glove with news."¹⁶ This is an encouraging step and Mr. Reznik believes his argument is winning.

Finally, since the editorials represent the view of WGN Continental Broadcasting Company, they should be presented by the management, either by president Ward Quaal or by editorial director Bob Manewith.

Summary

Certainly WGN has handicaps in presenting the news. This is inherent in the independent station. WGN should be given credit for what it has done: its out-of-town bureaus, the decision to editorialize, emphasis on the local, emphasis on the most significant stories of the day, the building of a TV news team, the only half-hour newscast after midnight in

¹⁵Petersen, Chicago Tribune, August 23, 1970.

¹⁶Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

Chicago, the hiring of professional newsmen who know their jobs. But more could be done. It will require the backing of management. The people in the news department, like most conscientious, dedicated journalists, would like to expand on their present boundaries. Al Reznik, for one, exhibited a dedication and sincerity that is essential to the successful operation of a news department aimed at informing the public. He showed fierce pride in his work and a toughness when he thought himself right. He showed common sense and practicality, outlining the department's strengths but also realizing the limitations of manpower, budget, airtime and being an independent. Al Reznik would like to expand (and apparently, along with his producers, was not too pleased that the evening news was cut to 15 minutes). Expansion, however, needs to be taken very seriously. It should not be done frivolously or without solid reasons:

The way to expand, if luckily the revenue is available, is not to add more and more people to the staff without considering now badly they are needed or what use can be made of them. The way to expand is to consider what television news does not do, where it fails, and move in that direction.¹⁷

WGN has made valuable contributions to Chicago through its news and editorial programming. However the station, by virtue of its independent status, is in a unique position to make even greater strides in news programming for the community. Its full potential as a community news service has not been realized.

¹⁷Green, Television News, p. 288.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

WIRE SERVICES

APPENDIX A

WIRE SERVICES

Associated Press

United Press International

United Press Midwest Wire

Chicago City News Bureau

Federal Aviation Agency

A-Wires

Western Union Sports

Associated Press Sports

City News Bureau Public Relations Wire

United Press Film Service

United Press Audio Service

United Press Facsimile Wire

Four (4) Weather Bureau Wires

APPENDIX B

WGN-TELEVISION

EMERGENCY OPERATION PROCEDURE

APPENDIX B

WGN-TELEVISION

EMERGENCY OPERATION PROCEDURE

NOTE: Emergency weather warnings will be initiated by the meteorologist in charge of the United States Weather Bureau, who will give direct notice thereof to broadcast stations via teletype. When such notice is received by the News Room, the following procedure will be followed:

(THIS INFORMATION PERTAINS ONLY TO THE WGN-TV CONVERAGE AREA)

1. THE NEWS ROOM WILL CARRY THE MESSAGE TO THE TV DIRECTOR WHO IS DIRECTING THE AIR PROGRAM AT THE TIME.
2. THE DIRECTOR WILL CALL FOR THE "WEATHER BULLETIN" SLIDE.
3. THE DIRECTOR CUES THE ANNOUNCER TO READ THE BULLETIN. (THE BULLETIN WILL BE READ TWO TIMES.)

The second time the bulletin is read the director will take to a balop showing our coverage area, the "affected" area will be shaded gray.

ANNOUNCER COPY WILL READ AS FOLLOWS:

2 BY 2

ANNCR:

WEATHER BULLETIN

"Here is a weather warning from the United States Weather Bureau"
(ANNOUNCER READ BULLETIN VERBATIM)

TAKE BALOP SHOWING COVERAGE AREA (ANNOUNCER REPEATS BULLETIN)

TAKE 2 BY 2
WEATHER BULLETIN

"This has been an Emergency Weather Warning issued by the United States Weather Bureau. We now resume our regular programming."

4. Director returns to normal programming.
5. The Newsroom will then immediately prepare copy for the videograph stating what the weather bulletin contains. Any confusing passages will be re-written so information will not be misleading.
6. The crawl will then be aired within five minutes of the original bulletin. This operation will be continued until weather information is updated, or an "all clear" is given. As weather information is updated, all of the above steps will be repeated until the "all clear" is given.

IF HARRY VOLKMAN IS AVAILABLE FOR WEATHER BULLETIN

If Mr. Volkman is available to do bulletin and routine is coming from Studio 5, Mr. Volkman will do the bulletin LIVE.

ALL PROCEDURES WILL BE THE-SAME-ONLY STEP FOUR WILL VARY:

After Mr. Volkman has read, "Here is a bulletin from the Weather Bureau, we will take to Camera 1 or Same in Studio 4. At the close of the on-the-air bulletin we will switch to the bulletin slide and return to normal programming.

We will still use the videograph.

1970 Tornado Procedures

The "tornado season" is here. Harry Volkman says we can expect various forms of severe weather conditions for the next two months. For those of you who have been with us more than a year, the procedure will seem familiar. However, it is appropriate to review it at this time, and for newer members of our staff to learn it.

Memoranda outlining the procedure as posted in each control room and in each studio or announce booth. News personnel will be responsible for initiating the system within the station in conformance with this procedure.

RADIO: Use of the Emergency Broadcast System procedure in connection with weather information activates many receivers throughout our listening area. Most of these are in public safety offices, schools and hospitals. Generally following this procedure once with each general area involved is appropriate for that function. (WGN Radio is the "key" station in this area. The carrier-cutting procedure activates these special receivers and also activates warning devices in the control rooms of other broadcast stations in this area.)

With the first weather warning requesting EBS procedure, we will follow this procedure. We will, however, use the weather information at frequent intervals while the watch or warning is in effect. Subsequently, we will use the EBS procedure should a watch or warning be issued for another area, or should a watch or warning for the first area be issued during another hour. We would prefer to limit use of the EBS procedure to once per hour per area, while continuing to broadcast the weather information periodically, whether or not additional watches or warnings are issued.

TELEVISION: In addition to the procedure described on the attached pages, you should know that the Videograph is in part loaded for emergency weather messages. Only the last portion of the message will have to be added:

- V.G. #77,000 Here is a weather bulletin from WGN News. The United States Weather Bureau says a severe weather warning is in effect until (ADD TIME AND AREA EFFECTED).
- V.G. #77,016 Here is a weather bulletin from WGN News. The United States Weather Bureau says a severe weather watch is in effect until (ADD TIME AND AREA EFFECTED).
- V.G. #77,032 Here is a weather bulletin from WGN News. The United States Weather Bureau says a tornado watch is in effect until (ADD TIME AND AREA EFFECTED).
- V.G. #77,048 Here is a weather bulletin from WGN News. The United States Weather Bureau says a tornado warning is in effect until (ADD TIME AND AREA EFFECTED).
- V.G. #77,064 This has been a weather bulletin from WGN News. Stay tuned to WGN-TV for further information. Details with Harry Volkman at 5:00 p.m.

V.G. #77,080 This has been a weather bulletin from WGN News.
 Stay tuned to WGN-TV for further information.
 Details with Harry Volkman at 10:00 p.m.

V.G. #77,100 This has been a weather bulletin from WGN News.
 Stay tuned to WGN-TV for further information.

These VG messages should be coupled, one from the first group
 (of four) followed immediately by one from the second group
 (of three).

Harry Volkman will be able to use Studio #4 for television at
 almost any time, should he be in the building at the time we
 are carrying emergency weather information. He can also go
 live on radio, either in the studio or via phone.

APPENDIX C

FILM, COLOR AND EQUIPMENT

APPENDIX C

FILM, COLOR AND EQUIPMENT

Film

WGN shoots approximately 25,000 feet of color film each week,¹ or about 100,000 feet each month. This is more than most stations and compares favorably with other large market news operations. WCBS in New York uses 125,000 feet per month. KRON in San Francisco shoots 75,000 feet each month. Smaller operations shoot less film. KCRA in Sacramento, California shoots 60,000 feet of color film each month while KTIV in Sioux City, Iowa, shoots 17,000 feet each month.²

WGN newsfilm is processed at a laboratory about 15 minutes from the studio. Couriers carry the film between the lab and the newsroom.

Color

WGN-TV operates entirely in color and all newsfilm is shot in color. This is an expensive undertaking but many stations feel they must do it to provide better, more realistic coverage. WGN began phasing into color in 1963 and went all color about two years later.

¹Reznik interview, September 3, 1970.

²Wood, Electronic Journalism, p. 39.

Newsreal Equipment

WGN listed the following newsreel equipment in 1968:

- 1 1200 ft. Auricon sound camera
- 2 600 ft. Auricon sound cameras
- 2 100 ft. Auricon sound cameras
- 8 100 ft. Bell & Howell sound cameras
- 1 100 ft. Cine Special camera
- 6 light meters
- 4 portable light bars
- 1 portable stand bar light
- 6 Frizzo lights
- 3 Sylvania Sun-Guns

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