

TV IS A TIME MACHINE

by Phil Gietzen

I am a stranger in a stranger land. I was born in Beaumont, Texas, April 14, 1941. Aries, Sagitarius moon, Leo rising. My mother (Scorpio), nine months pregnant, trained to Beaumont, Texas on the City of New Orleans to see my Dad who was on a business trip. In 1941 she was afraid to fly, but I wondered myself if it might not have been better to have been born in an airplane in 1941, instead of Beaumont, Texas. I mean, my chart would have been different. Alas it was Beaumont not the airplane. I came, though, not from Beaumont, but from Blue Ridge, East Tennessee, Western North Carolina. My folks have been in that neck of the Great Smokeys for nigh on 200 years. They fought the war between the states, rebels of a sort unknown in this time. They fell to the guns and swords of the industrial Yankees who not only enslaved the Negro and the South, but the world, Vietnam to Watergate.

"This is Arlene Francis telling you once again that the biggest is not the best. This smaller Phillips tablet contains more antacid than either of the two leading roll type tablets . . . This is Arlene Francis telling you once again that the biggest is not the best . . . once again the biggest is not the best . . . once again . . . once again . . ."

On the West Coast we see everything three hours after it happens. Everything ABC/CBS/NBC sends us. When people in New York are watching Johnny Carson on the Late Show from Hollywood, it's 11:00 p.m. in New York, but in Hollywood it's still daylight and the California sunset is beginning to make the shadows of the palms along Sunset Boulevard look like spiders along the great Star Mile. Every night I watch the ABC news at 5:30, then I watch the NBC news at 6:00, and then I watch the CBS news at 6:30. I get all the news from three different networks. Plus I learn from watching all three, instead of just one of the three, as people in the East do, that Arlene Francis appears on each of the three stations simultaneously in the East but in the West she comes on during each of three separate broadcasts. So once again I see Arlene Francis telling me that the biggest is not the best. I see the war in Viet Nam three times . . . the same pictures but with different voice over . . . I see the politics three times . . . I see the snafus, the failures, the headline stories not in the context of a choice between ABC/CBS/NBC but as an hour and a half long feature film . . . each group telling the stories their way but still telling the same stories. The point here of course is that the present in New York is the future in San Francisco, and the present in San Francisco is the past in New York. Our 12:00 noon is their 3:00 p.m. Extending the idea further why not our Saturday being their Monday or