

# THE WORLD'S LARGEST TV STUDIO

## TOP VALUE TELEVISION —OVERVIEW

Top Value Television (T VTV) began in early 1972 as an Ant Farm/Raindance fantasy project to cover the Democratic and Republican National Conventions. It became a reality in April, '72 when the project received full press accreditation. The people who worked on the tape were chosen because of certain video skills, organizational skills and/or equipment which they could provide. For the Democratic Convention there were 28 of us; four from Raindance, four from Ant Farm, four from Antioch, Ohio, three Videofreex, and independent video people from New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.

Funding came from small foundations, individual donors, and four cable systems (Teleprompter, Sterling Manhattan, Cypress Communications, and Continental CableVision) to whom the tape was pre-sold. Although the cable systems provided only 25% of the funding, the precedent of selling programming to cable stations was established. The agreement made with cable systems was that the program would be finished within 2 weeks after the end of the convention and the systems could view the tape and choose whether or not to air it. In essence, we felt we were doing some programming R&D for cable systems.

All of our footage was shot on 1/2" Sony portapak and then edited on Sony 1". We have the capability of distributing on 1/2", 1", 2" or cassette.

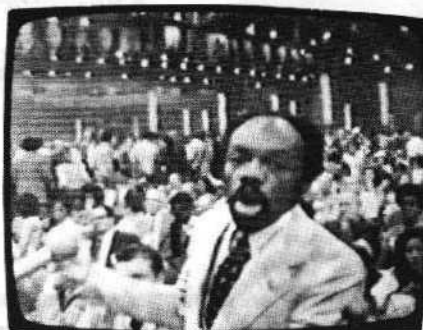
After the Democratic edit we were able to sell the tape to a UHF station in Chicago (Channel 44), and to approach more cable systems with a finished program in hand.

We found that tooling up for the second (Republican) convention went a lot more smoothly. First of all we had learned how to save money. The Democrat edit cost \$12,000; the second was budgeted at \$8,500. Again money came from similar sources. We had fewer people, less tape and a firmer outline of which stories to pursue.

The Republican edit was also done on 1" and was ready two weeks after the convention. The need now is to establish firmer distribution channels; to sell the tape to more cable systems, additional UHF stations and colleges. Monies generated from sales will go towards personal debts assumed and



Willy Brown—California delegation leader.



"We've just got to fan out among the delegations and work our asses off!"



VICTORY! Shirley and Willy.



Wallace Delegate, Alberta Johnston:  
"I think all the media's slanted."

deferred on equipment rental and salaries to those who worked on Top Value Television.

## INSTRUCTIONS TO T VTV CREW:

THINGS TO TAPE: No way we can compete with the networks. Their resources are astounding.

Our tape will be about us trying to tape the Convention and have it make sense as tape; behind-the-scenes encounters between people; and a different aesthetic approach to the events that the networks will also be covering (e.g. inside the Hall itself). In addition, we'll cover official outside activities (e.g. the Democratic Telethon, parties) and ad hoc ones (e.g. demonstrations).

Specifically, we want tape of:

**Delegates:** Because we will not have unlimited access to the floor, we want to pick up on specific behind-the-lines Convention-related activity. If we can develop a rapport with delegates and hang out with them we can be there at the informal moments which the networks can't cover but which can give a better sense of the Convention than staged interviews.

Specifically, we should try to be with delegates at dinner, in caucus rooms, in their hotel rooms, at parties, etc. We already have pledges of access from different state delegates and one may even take a Porta-Pak on the floor. Rather than cover a lot of them, we should concentrate on a few as tape, others for intelligence. The continuing saga of a delegate may make a good continuity device in the final edit.

In terms of what types of delegates, they should be chosen as to color and articulation of viewpoint, and whether or not you'd want to hang out with them. Specifically we're thinking of people like a middle-aged Texas liberal friend of LBJ's, and Wallace people.

**The Media:** Miami Beach is the world's largest TV studio. The hall itself is a TV studio. We need to document the media presence. This can be done partly through visuals which show equipment, crews, and interviews; and partly through sound: either newsmen talking to each other, or interviews with newsmen. In fact, newsmen are the only people we would consider doing a formal interview with.

You should also make friends with newsmen as they'll give you tips about events and processes. Chances are they