



From the Poet's Corner

I.

We are gliding on miles of
black glass
so near yet so far...
away.

Time seems to stand still for
just a moment,
even tho'
our lives are swiftly
flying
by.

The laughter we once
knew
has turned to thought,
and,
we are united, but
still unaware of
the mention
that fills each
being.

Take me back to
that time and
let me know once more
the
feeling...

II.

The time was now,
the thought was mine.
It felt so good to know
I could accomplish.
Friends gave insight,
and you gave me a
knowledge of how I
was to say it all.

- Jane Edwards

In Ratings Race

'Today,' 'Good Morning' Battle for Early Risers

Recently, *Good Morning America*, ABC's morning chit-chat for early risers celebrated its first year on the air. Much "to-do" was made by ABC in the newspapers and promotional spots on the network about *Good Morning* having cut into the rating race against the seemingly impregnable *Today* show on NBC. For almost two decades, the *Today* show has dominated the early morning hours, and attempts by both rival networks, ABC and CBS, to try and break *Today's* domination had been futile until ABC launched *Good Morning America*.

Even *Good Morning* wasn't given much of a chance to put a dent into *Today's* Neilsens', after all, it had been a hastily assembled program created to replace the elaborate, but poorly rated *AM America*. *Good Morning America* was to be a mixture of gossip and personality potpourri, focusing on lighter subjects than the traditional morning offerings of the *Today* show. An actor--of all things--was to headline as host. Absurd, most thought. But Neilsen ratings show the format has worked and ABC is beginning to narrow the rating gap between the two morning shows.

However, the *Today* staff has been experiencing several problems that has allowed *Good Morning America* to slowly make inroads on their audiences. Production innovations behind the scenes have caused numerous format changes. Yet, overt changes appear to have hindered the *Today* show the most. With Barbara Walter's departure coupled with Jim Hartz's removal as host, *Today* has experienced a noticeable gap in leadership. Following the up-front shuffle, a personality parade ensued for weeks in which various NBC personnel "tried-out" for the vacated position as host. Tom Brokaw finally won the helmsman job. But, no sooner did Mr. Brokaw get settled into his swivel chair did the production staff begin the quest for a much sought after replacement for Walter's empty chair. After many faces had come and gone, Jane Pauley--a 26-year-old Chicago newswoman--won out over her competitors.

Jane Pauley's selection we hail as a wise choice. Ms. Pauley is both personable and intelligent, as well as being a first rate interviewer. She is no Barbara Walters and she doesn't claim to be. She has a fresh, dynamic, often-times sympathetic approach to those she interviews. For example, Ms. Pauley's recent interview with two-time academy

award winner, Glenda Jackson, was stimulating and intriguing. Ms. Pauley's interviews steer a narrow course, finding common ground from which to ask in-depth questions without treading dangerously into sensitive areas. Ms. Walters never learned--or perhaps never practiced--this technique. But, Pauley seems to realize that the early morning audience is a different sort of audience. Heavy, aggressive interviewing is not for the early hours, she concludes, and probably rightly so. Hopefully, Ms. Pauley's presence will be the freshness the *Today* show has needed for some time. Mr. Brokaw's certainly will not.

Brokaw was adequate as a newsman, but his anchorbooth techniques leave much to be desired. His attempts at wit are just that--attempts. His interviews are surface, usually showing he knows little if anything about the subjects he attempts to delve into in his interviews. (This was clearly shown recently in his interview with several scholars dealing with the Chinese nation after the death of Mao.) Added to these maladies, Mr. Brokaw can not think fast enough on his feet to deal with the wide variety of guests the *Today* show comes into contact with. Usually, he appears sleepy, unenthusiastic. What good effects Ms. Pauley gives are usually destroyed by Mr. Brokaw.

As for the rest of the *Today* troop, notably Gene Shalit and Lew Wood, one must conclude that they do their limited roles well. Shalit is the comic relief for the show; just looking at him makes one laugh. The producers would be wise to expand his role, and lessen--greatly--Tom Brokaw's.

The Neilsen tallies still show *Good Mornings'* rise, while the *Today* show seems to have stabilized for the time. Meanwhile at CBS, their challenger to *Today* and *Good Morning*--the *CBS Morning News*--slinks further into the ratings heap. With the early morning offerings going to the lighter side of things, perhaps the best solution for CBS is to put *Captain Kangaroo* against the heavier fair of ABC and NBC. Why, who could think of a better face to wake up to than Mr. Mooses' or Bunny Rabbits', not to mention the ageless Captain's? The way we see things, the Captain and company have a head start on all the rest. Transfer Ms. Pauley to the Captain's Place and they would be an unbeatable team that neither ABC or NBC could handle!