

Buckley, Vidal Give ABC Lift

By HARVEY ELLIOTT
Tar Heel Features

The ABC Television Network is advertising its 1968 convention coverage as "The Unconventionals."

The name fits. For this network—locally, channel 5—will not broadcast every minute detail of the slow, plodding process of the two national conventions.

It will not go on the air from "convention headquarters" at 7 o'clock in the morning, and continue, all day, like the other two networks.

Instead, regular programming will prevail until 9:30 p.m., when a new and different form of television interpretive reporting takes over.

For an hour-and-a-half, an expert ABC team will analyze, argue and predict—dealing with every major development of the day.

They are shucking the formalities for the real history. If you want the slow spectacle of "America's political process," watch NBC and CBS.

But if you want sure fire analysis, the "third network" seems to be your best bet.

The ninety-minute programs will be televised each night of convention proceedings, and within the program, five distinct segments will be involved.

The first part of the program, at 9:30, will be a 25-30 minute "instant documentary" highlighting the most important theme of that day's activities.

For example, if the first day of the Republican convention shows us that Candidate X needs 35 votes for the nomination, ABC might call its first segment: "Miami, Day 1: The 35 Votes."

They might then show viewers—via film and taped reports—how Candidate X is seeking those 35 votes.

Following the instant documentary will be a 20-minute round-table discussion among the ABC News correspondents who have been covering the candidates, floor activities and behind-the-scenes action.

This section, called "Correspondents' Caucus," will be moderated by ABC News Political Editor William H. Lawrence, the only pundit of any stature to predict that President Johnson would not seek re-election.

The third segment of each night's coverage, "Closeup," will be a five to six minute "hard" news, in-depth film report which might otherwise have been ignored in ordinary gavel-to-gavel coverage.

The next segment, "A Second Look," running 15 to 20 minutes nightly, will feature the incisive, trenchant commentaries of ABC News guest commentators, William F. Buckley, Jr. and Gore Vidal.

Buckley, the ardent, articulate conservative, and Vidal, the sophisticated, observant liberal, will meet nightly to give their highly subjective, highly personalized and often irreverent views of the convention proceedings.

Finally, the "unconventional" convention format calls for an eight to ten minute segment called "Update," bringing the viewer up-to-the-minute news on what has transpired from the time ABC's convention program went on the air.

At the end of the "Update" segment there will be brief feature called "Lawrence on the Spot," in which veteran Political Editor William H. Lawrence will be called upon to make a nightly predication of what will transpire at the next day's session.

Anchorman for the proceedings will be Howard K. Smith, award-winning journalist and news commentator.

The Republican convention begins this Monday, and ABC (and channel 5) will preview on Saturday night at 9:30 and Sunday night at 10:45.

Thereafter, it's 90 minutes of edited, interpretive commentary beginning at 9:30 nightly.

If you don't get a kick out of ceremonials, that is.

Harvey Elliott Film Fare

HOW SWEET IT IS. At the Varsity.

James Garner could be called the Richard Nixon of the acting profession.

Always around, probably competent but oh, so bland.

In fact, the combination of Garner and Debbie Reynolds is probably the most unexciting screen duo since Frankie and Annette.

And yet *How Sweet It Is* comes off a moderately amusing, though occasionally cheap, little movie comedy, largely due to director Jerry Paris.

Paris was the director of all those old Dick Van Dyke TV shows—with surefire writing and the best performing Van Dyke has done to date.

A lot of this flair has carried over to the big screen, despite material that is sometimes old-hat and stars who are largely inhibited.

The storyline has to do with a couple and their shaggy tennysbopper who spend a summer in Europe, with the principal complication arising from the fact that the husband, of course, takes his wife for granted.

In a fit of vengeful frenzy, Debbie enables a Frenchman to nearly seduce her, and she goes around constantly exposing herself in a turquoise bikini—Debbie Reynolds?—asking "Is this the body of a 40-year-old mother?"

She proves her point.

The honors in this not-great production go to Paris, for wringing good honest humor out of several small vignettes and a half-dozen excellent "bit" or supporting performances.

Paul Lynde gives his usual sidesplitting manner to a small part as a ship's steward. Alexandra Hay, a promising young blonde, is good as a teenage seductress on the tour to which Garner is assigned as photographer.

Ann Morgan Guilbert, another refugee from *The Dick Van Dyke Show* (as neighbor Millie Helper), shines in a very small role as Lynde's wife. And an unbilled French chef also provides spontaneous laughter in another sequence towards the end.

These performances save the comedy from total cheapness and mediocrity—of which there are plenty of examples throughout. Was the production hurried?

It seemed so. Several stock shots—of tourists departing ship, of the aerial Riviera—were inserted, and they had a flushed, grainy look.

The editing is careless and special effects, such as a Mona Lisa montage sequence and a "shampoo commercial" scene of Debbie running on the beach—are largely extraneous and seem to be added for padding or, worse, class.

Class, it hasn't got. The new production company of National General Pictures would be advised to spend a little more time on their pictures.

How Sweet It Is was their second release.

Poor Cow, their first, starts Sunday at the Varsity. Wonder how they fared with that?

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DON'T FORGET *Warhol's I, A Man*—April 8, 9 p.m., Carroll Hall. Film Society is selling tickets for \$1.00.

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Wacht Joins Hospital Staff

Dr. Richard F. Wacht has joined the administrative staff of North Carolina Memorial Hospital in the newly created position of controller.

He will have overall responsibility for the hospital's business affairs as well as assist in the development of a computerized management information system in the hospital.

A native of Ambridge, Pa., Wacht earned his master's and doctorate degrees in business administration at UNC. He was formerly a member of the business faculty at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana.

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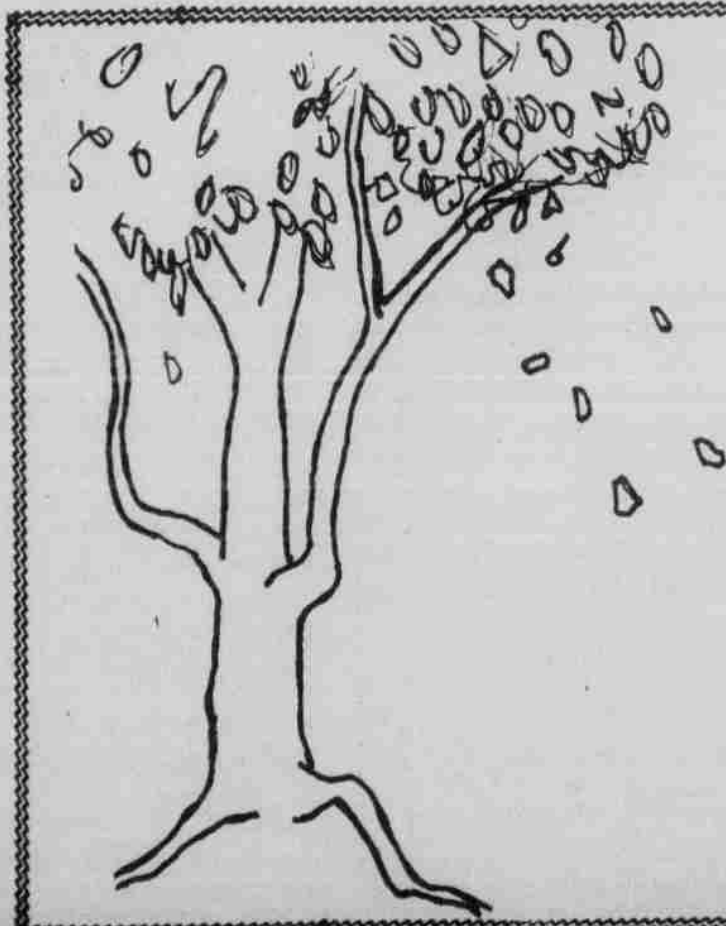
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