

20 May 2008

Dear Brian:

I started working in broadcasting in 1949, when I was hired as the one and only floor director at [REDACTED] in Baltimore, a station owned, then and now, by the Hearst corporation. I retired 40 years later having worked as a floor director, announcer, director, producer, program director and, best of all, as the station's [REDACTED]. In this position my basic charge was to go out into the community and do good. I joined countless committees and boards of non-profit organizations, chaired the Red Cross and United Way boards, plus several others, and produced hundreds upon hundreds of free PSA's, which I shared with the other commercial stations in the market, at no cost to them. Along the way I garnered some Emmies, an Albert Lasker Award and expressions of appreciation from a long list of individuals and organizations.

I set forth the above to establish my credentials and to prove that I am qualified to state that you have elevated television (and radio) to an unparalleled level of excellence by making C-SPAN a reality. I cannot tell you how pleased I was when you received the Presidential Medal of Honor, but I think you should also have been TIME's "Person of the Year", somewhere along the way. How interesting it would be if C-Span existed around the world. As they say on Antique Roadshow: "WOW!"

I was fortunate to work in the business during what I consider the "golden years", when there were broadcasters who took their commitment to the community seriously. We produced documentaries for which it was impossible to secure sponsors, but what we got in return was public response that was truly rewarding. One documentary concerning the State mental hospital drew nearly 10,000 pieces of mail, which we poured into a large wicker basket and actually placed on the governor's desk. This was in the early 60's and network programs didn't draw mail like this. We got an Emmy.

A second hour-long program you might possibly even have seen, was aired way back in 1964. It featured an elderly black man, in work clothes, talking about his love of his God, his country and his family. His name was James

Emory Bond, and he actually walked more than three miles from his home to the studio, in order to share his thoughts concerning a panel discussion, aired the previous evening on WBAL-TV, about the crime situation in Baltimore. Expecting to use 30 seconds or so of his reactions on our evening news, I took him into a studio and asked him to share some brief comments. Something extraordinary happened, and I ended up with more than an hour of tape, all shot on a single camera, and showing only Mr Bond. My boss, [REDACTED] a true broadcast pioneer and General Manager of WBAL-TV, viewed the tape and decided that we would air it that same evening in place of the scheduled NBC network program.

Audience response was overwhelming, and we had to re-air it two more times. Subsequently, word got around about this unusual tape and it was aired in virtually every major market in the country, including Washington. We provided free copies to any station that shipped us a blank, and the stations, in turn, had to agree to air it uninterrupted and without sponsorship or commercials. We got an EMMY for this unique program.

To put it bluntly, things like these two programs don't happen anymore. There are few, if any, stations that still "serve the public interest". My old employer airs no live, local programs whatsoever, except newscasts. PSA's don't exist anymore, though some spots are logged as PSA's. They are really promotional events co-sponsored by the station, and stations won't promote a non-profit event unless they are a "sponsor". It's really sad. To top it all off, you get your license renewed by mailing in a post card.!

Having bent your ear for almost two pages, I would now like to make a suggestion. I am an ardent listener to C-SPAN radio, and I suggest you add what I can only refer to as a TiVo button so that your hosts can drop in station breaks and identification of speakers etc., without losing some of what is being said. As you know, TiVo allows one to stop and re-start a program without losing even a split second. It would make it possible for your commentators to make a lot more comments, particularly identifying who is speaking, without interrupting what's being said, and would add only seconds to the length of the program. Maybe I'm being picky, but it bugs me when a host talks over what someone else is saying.

Again, thanks for what you have created. It is a great service to our country. Maybe someday our paths will cross and I can shake your hand. In the meantime, good luck and good health to you.

Sincerely
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Baltimore, MD 21210

[REDACTED]