

I watch C-SPAN because it has given me something I've looked for all my adult life--a chance to attain a broad view of very complex national and world affairs. In the past I have tried to do this by reading from the many books and journals which my professor/husband brought home and from magazines and newspapers. But there was never enough time! What I could read in snatches of leisure time was a minuscule amount of what is needed. Enter C-SPAN. It is now possible WHILE DOING HOUSEWORK to listen to ideas being enunciated, challenged, and debated back and forth. When the discussion becomes heated I run with dust cloth in hand to watch the action and catch something like Secretary Schultz losing his cool with Congressman Obey or Senator Thurmond scolding a witness before his Committee.

My husband has retired now and often works on his writing at home. With the lure of a Hearing or a panel on any of a wide variety of topics, it is easier for me to entice him into drying the dishes. I, and sometimes my husband with me, have seen so many memorable presentations that have made a new life for me. One way to show what I mean is to jot down some of the things my memory can feed back to me: National Press Club luncheons with a parade of notables such as Mrs. Indira Gandhi when the Club was in its old location and Senators Lugar and Bentsen talking from the "roll-top desk"; panels, debates, and national conferences sponsored by the American Enterprise Institute, Institute for Policy Studies, League of Women Voters, Conservative Caucus, Americans for Democratic Action, and, of course, C-SPAN's debates and call-ins.

There are special programs such as A Day in the Life of _____;

inside C-SPAN with a look at your staff and premises; the all-night broadcast of Larry King and guests Hedrick Smith, David Broder, and Jack Nelson complete with fruit basket from C-SPAN; the complete coverage of an Iowa caucus; scenes of politicians at play--the Washington Press Club salute to Congress, the Congressional baseball game, and the hilarious roasts.

The House of Representatives gavel-to-gavel deserves special mention. It is such a thrill that it will never become old hat to watch the budget being passed in a close vote, or even to hear a string of one-minute pronunciamientos. If the House becomes dull, one knows the tedium will soon be broken by a quorum vote and the beautiful music of Mozart or Vivaldi.

The above is only an overview of all the wonders I have seen and heard. The main thing is that with C-SPAN I have gained what I sought--the possibility of being an informed person on world and national affairs. The housework may take twice as long to get done, but I hope I am slower to form opinions and better able to defend them.

As a bonus, my husband and I in retirement have a new, shared interest.

