

Television Has Many Faults, But Time Wasted by People

A KANSAS CITY writer boasts that he turned off his television set two years ago and became "one of the two-tenths of one per cent of American homes without television." He wrote: "I don't watch television because it is a waste of time."

In the Oklahoma City Times comic strip, "Gasoline Alley," Skeeze Wallet has been perturbed because his wife, Nina, gave away their TV after she decided he was wasting too much time with it.

Probably a lot of Oklahoma football widows would like to turn off their sets until the season ends in January.

Kicking the TV set won't solve the problem that these somewhat drastic actions reflect—the problem of wasting time. Television sets don't waste time. People do.

Much of the criticism of television programming is valid. Too much violence and crime are displayed to impressionable youngsters. Announcers often can't or don't separate opinions from news. Now the tube is bringing pornographic movies into our homes.

Yet, this device has reached marvelous heights to reveal earthlings walking on the moon and to give us livelier views of other parts of the earth. It provides music, entertainment, news and information so lavishly that the temptation to overindulge is always present, even when other things need to be done.

By being available, except for a very few nighttime hours, television may become either a habit or an obsession. It might become the schedule-setter for an entire family. But, of course, such problems also may result from too much work, golf, fishing, radio, reading or any other type of activity which is carried to excess.

Few things pervade a home as persistently as a TV set that can be heard throughout the house. It displaces conversation, discourages reading and makes studying difficult for schoolchildren. Social and other outside interests often are neglected.

Time is a limited asset—even more limited than money—and if it is to cover essential needs, it must be budgeted carefully and used to produce most desirable results.

Television program directors are primarily concerned with whether people will watch a program. Whatever will attract viewers is what they will broadcast. Many high quality programs have been cancelled because they did not show up well in TV ratings.

Zany, trivial shows often rate high. For example, even TV executives have been amazed that a carnival midway type giveaway show called "Candlepins for Cash" attracts an estimated 40 per cent of the audience in the Boston area and rates tops in its time slot in other locations. It offers prizes up to \$250,000 but mostly participants win less than \$25 and viewers' hopes of sharing in this wealth are vicarious, to say the least.

Within limits of audience rating surveys, each person may watch whatever he or she chooses on TV, deciding for himself whether it is a benefit or a loss of time. The choice to become a part of the audience, in a way, is a vote for continuing that type of program. To turn it off is a vote against it.

Whatever the decision, it is up to the individual to determine whether his time will be used, wasted or just passed.