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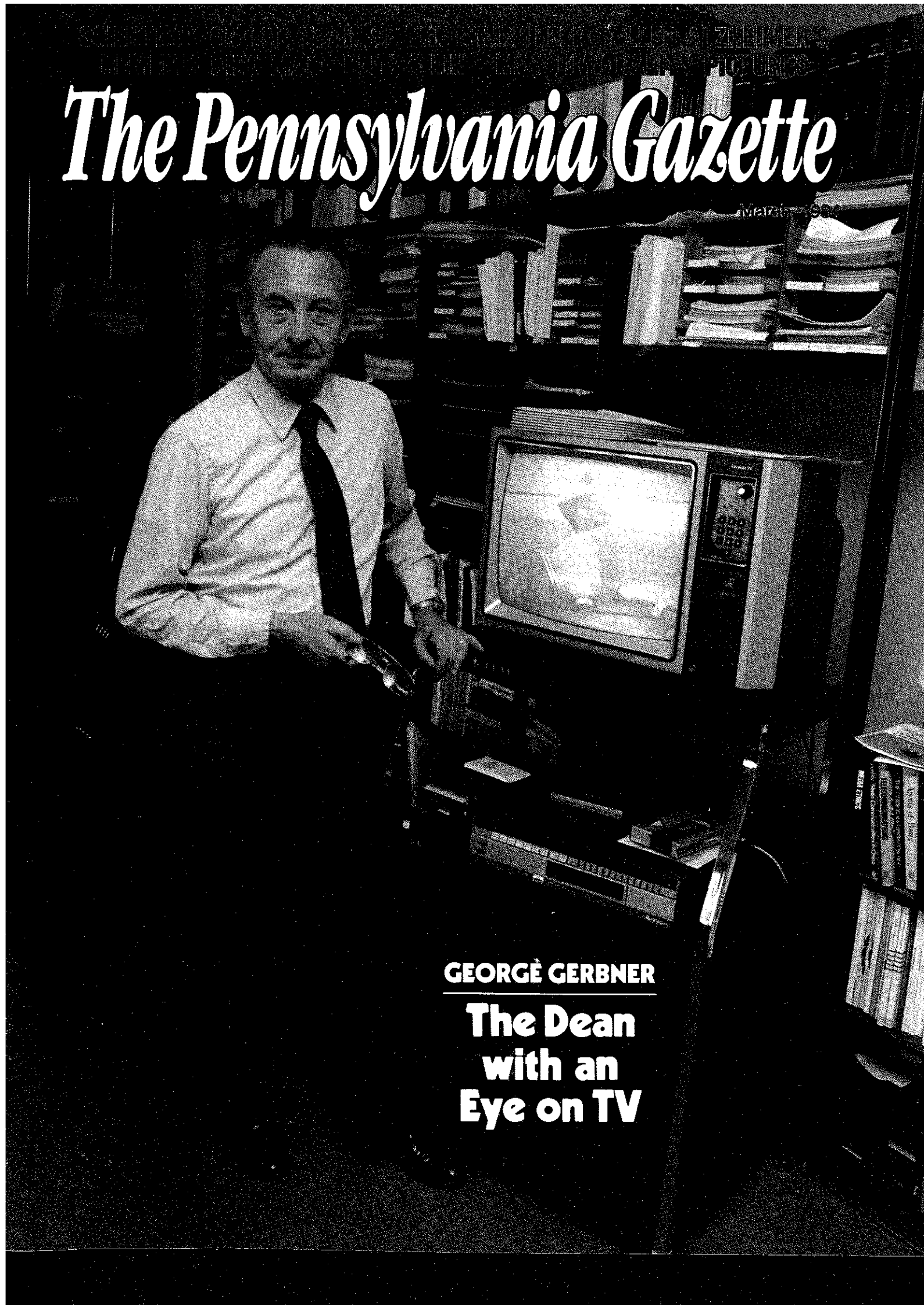

GEORGE GERBNER

The Dean with an Eye on TV

The Dean Of Communications

IN HELPING GIVE DIRECTION TO THE ANNENBERG SCHOOL DURING ITS EARLY YEARS, GEORGE GERBNER ALSO HELPED DEFINE A WHOLE FIELD OF STUDY.

By Marshall Ledger *Photographs by Annette Lein*

DR. GEORGE GERBNER, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications and a longtime critic of the vested interests of television programming, has his own vested interest in bad television—it continues to confirm his research.

During his nearly 30 years of scholarship, he has come to many discomfiting conclusions about the medium. Sometimes, he goes on television to discuss them. Network executives may feel that *his* TV appearances are bad programming. They certainly are not fond of his research.

Gerbner originated the Cultural Indicators Project, which, for 15 years, has tabulated and analyzed how television depicts violence, aging, women and minorities, sex-role stereotypes, occupations, political involvement, educational achievement and aspirations, health (including safety and nutrition, as well as medicine), science and scientists, family life, and religion.

Since 1972, members of the project have published annual reports on television violence, and it is this subject which shot Gerbner into the national spotlight and makes him a figure as familiar in Congressional hearings as in the popular media. A bit of drollery might suggest his stature: Reporting on a response to his research seven years ago, *Broadcasting* magazine, a trade publication, stated that a CBS network executive "has challenged the divinity of the word on television violence issued annually by Dr. George Gerbner."

The networks help keep him important. Late in 1982, the National Institute of Mental Health issued a two-volume report on research on television and behavior. In a rebutting pamphlet, ABC focused on four major conclusions, two of them derived from Gerbner's work.

Others in research also treat him as something special. When Thomas G. Krattenmaker, professor of law at the Georgetown University Law Center, and L. A. Powe, professor of law at the University of Texas, analyzed "Televised Violence: First Amendment Principles and Social Science Theory" in the *Virginia Law Review* a few years back, they discussed laboratory and "real world" experiments of many social scientists in one group and Gerbner by himself in another. They attributed his staying power to the violence profile, to "his ability to write comprehensible English in popular journals," and to his tie with the National Institutes of Health (which, over

Dean Gerbner is overseeing the $9.6-million expansion of his school.

the years, has granted some $1,500,000 to his research).

Some observers suggest that he is an adept self-promoter. "I always return phone calls from the media," says Gerbner.

Gerbner's scholarly career and his forays into the public arena keep him busy enough, but he has another career as well. This year, he begins his third decade as dean of the Annenberg School. The school had been open for only five years before he was brought to Penn to head it, and it undoubtedly bears his stamp. The school was malleable, and he is forceful. Partly because of his scholarly contributions, partly because of the way he turned his dreams for the school into a curriculum and a laboratory for research, and partly because of his personality, he has been a dominating presence not only in the school but also in the field of communications.

Gerbner is a vigorous 64-year-old figure who puts in 18-hour days during the week and catches up on his sleep during weekends (he reportedly can also catnap standing up and awaken, in moments, fully refreshed). His face is characterized by a sloping forehead, accentuated by his receding hairline; the lines of his brow suggest intensity. He comes across as no-nonsense, a trait which he has no doubt found useful in discouraging triflers as well as in getting a point across in scholarly and policy-making situations. "He is a hard taskmaster because he demands very much from himself," says Ilona Gerbner, his wife. "He takes his work very seriously, and there is no fooling around there."

Those who know him only through his research sometimes picture him as authoritarian. The impression may come from his fierce and biting defense of his work. "George is stubborn and resistant to argument or opposition on his intellectual or theoretical work. He's very convinced that he's right," says a colleague, who adds, "His success as a figure in the social-science world has a lot to do with being stubborn—it's one way to have an impact." But his attitude is not an act; his research matters to him. "Many scholars do interesting problems which are not central to their most deeply held beliefs," this colleague continues. "What George does is central to him. He may be stubborn, but he is also passionately involved."

Gerbner is described as "egalitarian" to work with and as someone who "carries an authority." The latter is explained this way: "He might open a discussion with what he thinks without asking you what you think—but that doesn't mean he doesn't want you to speak." His sense of humor is full of irony, akin, perhaps, to that of Honoré Daumier, whose caricatures hang on his office wall.

His administrative style as dean is "more feudal than modern managerial," says one member of his faculty. Gerbner is said to be everything from "eminently fair and generous" to a ruler "with an iron hand." Unlike faculty in the larger schools, who have department heads between them and their deans, the 13 regular members of the Annenberg School faculty deal directly with their dean—with varying degrees of satisfaction. Gerbner is praised for "absorbing or deflecting" the technicalities of the sort of University business which some professors feel would detract from their academic work.

To some, he conveys the impression that he is going to follow the letter of the law, but then they see him come out on the side of compassion. Not long ago, a member of his faculty was forced to retire

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early because of poor health; Gerbner reportedly fought stiffly and successfully to get the professor the pension he would have been entitled to if he had retired at the usual age.

One observer says: "He seems to have a need to be in charge. In a university where everyone is in charge and well-learned, that may be hard to take. It may be that George needs to be on top of every detail. That's his personality." Another describes Gerbner as the sort of person who follows you through a revolving door and walks out first.

Gerbner has been called "cool" and "difficult to get to know." His wife agrees with this assessment, and explains: Outside the confines of the family, "he feels that all there is to know about him is his work." Conversely, he brings the problems of running the school home "much less than I would wish," she says. "I sometimes wish he'd let his hair down more often about things which *must* bother him occasionally. But it's very difficult for him to talk about things that bother him." (She adds, "He wouldn't agree. He would say that he discusses everything with me.")

Some of his artwork decorates the walls of his home in suburban Philadelphia. There are pencil drawings of lush vegetation and watercolors of village streets, one with a bread line seen from a distance. Gerbner fills up the area inside the frame; nature or society seems crowded. The pieces were done much earlier; he has not painted since he came to Penn. Now, his major recreation is tending the plants which, inside until the spring, jam the window areas. The only hint of chaos in his life is his basement study, where cardboard files bulge with papers and every surface is piled with books and more papers, and the modest space is so filled that his chair seems hopelessly trapped behind his desk.

GERBNER WEARS MANY HATS: HARD TASKMASTER, NURTURER OF SCHOLARS, LOVER OF THE ARTS.

Gerbner's story begins in Budapest, Hungary, where he was born in 1919. His father was a teacher, his mother a photographer; during the Depression, she turned to dressmaking (in the European sense, Gerbner points out, meaning that she developed her own lines for regular clients). By the time he was 19 years old, he had won first prize in a national contest on Hungarian literature and had had a book of poetry published. He also collected songs and stories in villages, with the intention of studying folklore and literature at the University of Budapest. He completed a year of work there before the war interrupted his plans.

In 1939, Hungary was preparing to ally itself with the Nazis. Gerbner could expect to be drafted. "That was not the side I wanted to be on," he says, so he decided to emigrate. "My parents, while they were sorry to see me leave, were glad that I had an opportunity to get out while I could." His father disappeared and presumably died during the war; his mother died three years ago but had been able to visit him in the United States; he has a brother who practices medicine in Budapest.

Gerbner emigrated to Italy, then to France. From there, he applied to U.C.L.A. and was admitted, but he had no visa to enter the United States. Instead, he went to Mexico, where he worked for six months as a guide, mostly for American tourists. His accent evidently made him sound as though he belonged there. "My legitimacy as a guide in Mexico was only based on the fact that I couldn't speak English," he says. "They just believed me. I thought I was a pretty good guide."

When his Mexican visa was close to expiring, Gerbner went to Cuba. The American consul there gave him both a visa for New Orleans and advice—that he would need money before he would be allowed to stay in the United States. He went to New Orleans anyway and was ordered deported. "When the hearing was over, someone back of the table had the decency to say, 'Well, you can appeal,'" he says. "I was never informed of any rights during the hearing." He did appeal and waited in New Orleans for two weeks until the verdict arrived from Washington, D.C. He stayed with friends of his half-brother, Laslo Benedek, who is now a retired movie director; another houseguest for part of the time was Sinclair Lewis. In two weeks, Gerbner received his visa for a bond of $250, put up by Benedek, who had to borrow it.

Gerbner hitchhiked to Los Angeles, then enrolled at U.C.L.A. and proceeded to flunk the test for basic English. With a doggedness that some find characteristic of him, he decided to write a series of articles on his 7,000-mile adventure. He submitted each installment to his remedial teacher, who corrected it, and then he submitted it to the student newspaper. Cut off from his native language, he was finished with poetry; certain kinds of writing, he feels, are almost impossible to do except in one's mother tongue. The next year, he transferred to the writing program at the University of California at Berkeley and eventually graduated with a degree in journalism.

He joined *The San Francisco Chronicle* as a reporter and editor. The Government classified him as an enemy alien; "a little-known fact of history is that Hungary declared war on the United States," he says. In 1943, he became an American citizen. He enlisted in an airborne division of the infantry and was recruited into the Office of Strategic Services, the wartime intelligence operation that was the predecessor to the Central Intelligence Agency.

Gerbner was scheduled to have been dropped behind enemy lines in Austria and help prepare surrendering troops for the eventual armistice, but, by mistake, he was dropped into Slovenia, one of the federated republics of Yugoslavia. He was reassigned to a partisan brigade and, when he and the others were not in flight, reported on German troops from the hills. (In those days, a cartoonist and friend of his depicted Gerbner in a caricature which hangs by Gerbner's bedside: parachuting under fire into enemy territory, Gerbner, his fountain pen strapped to his rifle, is shown nonchalantly reading Shaw.) By the end of the war, he had won a field commission as a first lieutenant.

During the armistice, he was assigned to help arrest Hungarian troops, among them the Prime Minister who was in office when he had emigrated. Gerbner joined the American military mission in Budapest with others representing the Allies in war trials there. "I was pleased to see that the trials were genuine," he says, offering as proof the fact that the sentences were "not indiscriminate."

When Gerbner returned to California, he did not go back alone. At a party, he happened to meet Ilona Kutas, an Austro-Hungarian actress who also taught theater. When they were introduced, Gerbner said, "I've seen you before"—a tired line that would have sunk him, she says, except that it was true: he had seen the production of the topical Hungarian play she was performing in. Later that evening, when she declined his invitation to go to the American officers' club after the party, he invited all of the guests. ("So you get an idea of how George Gerbner works," she says.) Not long thereafter, Gerbner received orders to go to Austria and knew that he would not be returning to Hungary. Ilona Gerbner remembers the statement that amounted to his marriage proposal, which was also their first discussion of marriage: "I found out," he declared to her, "that as a war bride,

George Gerbner communicates with his wife, Ilona, at home.

there's no problem getting you into the United States."

They were married and lived in Vienna for six months while Gerbner, who had gained his discharge from the Army, was employed by the United States Information Service as an editor in charge of a daily newspaper and news broadcasts. In 1947, they went to Los Angeles, where he waited for a newspaper job like the one he had held with the *Chronicle* and she began working on a master's degree in theater from U.C.L.A.

To jump ahead a bit: Ilona Gerbner gave up an established acting career to marry her husband and, hating the uncertainty of employment in the American acting system, refused to act in the United States. "But my marriage was most important, and there is no way for me to have done it all [the Gerbners have two children, too], and I have never regretted my decision," she says. "I have a strong sense of my own identity, of being a person in my own right regardless of what George did." She has, in fact, built her own career at Penn, where she is a senior lecturer in theater arts in the College and director of its theater laboratory. Last year, she forced a revision in the policy which had limited lecturers to six-year appointments. Student ratings of her teaching border on the ecstatic and mention how demanding the course is and how seriously she takes it.

According to her, her husband is "very, very American" because "he feels comfortable with a lack of leisure."

George Gerbner's period of unsolicited leisure ended abruptly in 1947 when he received a telephone call from his employment agency. A professor of journalism at John Muir Junior College had suddenly resigned to become chairman elsewhere; would Gerbner like a stopgap job as an instructor? "I started teaching that Monday, and I've been teaching ever since," he says.

Up to this point, Gerbner had not given academic life any thought. "An interest in Hungarian folklore didn't seem useful at the time," he says, "but I discovered that I have more freedom [as a scholar], and it's a more creative job for me." He gravitated toward the University of Southern California, where, based in a school of education, he earned a master's degree in communications with a thesis on television and education. A professor asked him to write a paper on what a graduate school of communications should be. The paper led him to his dissertation, in which he analyzed general theories and models of communication; it won the university award for the best dissertation in 1955. "What I was essentially doing," he says, "was inventing or pioneering the concept of communications as a basic concern with the production, nature, and role of symbols and messages of human and social life as a seminal approach to most, if not all, human problems—and, therefore, a basic academic discipline."

All during his graduate studies, he had been teaching and doing research. He began moving away from classroom journalism and, under the influence of Franklin Fearing, a social psychologist, toward the social aspects of mass communication. He also collaborated with Theodor Adorno in studies on the psychodynamics of television drama. This work taught him to look at what he calls "hidden messages," cultural assumptions that are an inherent part of stories and help in understanding them. Take, for instance, relationships among television characters: women rarely interact with women because, Gerbner says, men most often write the stories, and they are not interested in what women say among themselves unless they talk about men. Men express the greatest friendship as well as the greatest hostility when they talk to other men. And men and women typically go through tense negotiation about who dominates (the male usually wins). The regularity of such patterns in a sexist society makes them pass unnoticed, Gerbner suggests. They begin to stand out, however, when you sort events into categories and count the number of times they occur or when you encounter an individual story that violates the conventional relationships (a more interesting story, he says, "and usually a less salable one").

In 1956, Gerbner became an assistant professor in research at the Institute of Communications Research at the University of Illinois at Urbana. His new work was empirical, rather than theoretical, and was conducted over a period of time; both characteristics became a permanent part of his methodology. He joined a study in progress on the portrayal of mental illness in the mass media. Then he originated a study of the portrayal of schools and education in the mass media of 10 countries (the United States, several European nations, both Western and Eastern) over a period of 10 years. He looked at power roles that influence policies affecting the mass media ("institutional policy analysis"). Acknowledging the problems in developing a framework that is free of any "ethnocentric bias," he looked for a way to compare programs in various countries to see if different policies produce different messages or systems of messages ("message-system analysis" or "content analysis"). In such studies, single programs are less important than programs seen in the aggregate; mass communication begins to look like an assembly line, and Gerbner, employing the metaphor, asked what is rolling off the line. And then he asked whether the different systems of messages cultivated different habits of thought in the various audiences ("cultivation analysis").

Gerbner had risen to associate professor at Illinois when he was invited, in 1964, to apply for the deanship of the Annenberg School. "He was movable," recalls Dr. Robert E. Spiller, *'17 C, '24 Gr, '67 Hon*, the Felix E. Schelling Emeritus Professor of English Literature, who was serving as acting dean of the school at the time. "He is a top man, and he wanted a top job—he really wanted the job."

According to Spiller, the Annenberg School had not settled on whether it ought to prepare students for jobs in the mass media or for research and teaching in communications, and a previous com-

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mittee assigned to find a dean had to be disbanded because of the indecision. The appointment of Spiller as acting dean no doubt helped to determine the direction the school would take, because his own work was scholarly and interdisciplinary. Spiller liked the way Gerbner's research branched into sociology and psychology "in a general, theoretical way." He also liked its moral direction. Along with the atomic bomb and biological research, Spiller feels, the mass media constitute one of the major influences on contemporary life, and he wanted someone who would help foster the possibilities for good. Gerbner was his choice. "For an ax-cut into a basic situation, the appointment of George Gerbner is about as good as any could be," says Spiller, who regards it as "one of the best things I ever did in my life."

What did Gerbner see when he came for his interviews? "Nothing but opportunity," he says. Gilbert Seldes had been the first dean of the school. Gerbner calls him one of those brilliant people who do not have advanced degrees but produce influential books, and Seldes, who was known as, among other things, the author of a seminal work, *The Seven Lively Arts*, made a virtue out of the school's unsettled course. Gerbner recalls his saying, "We have some good people here, but we have not determined any direction—that's my present to you."

According to Gerbner, many graduate schools of communications in the United States have grown out of departments of journalism or speech or public relations or advertising or television, and the entrenched interests of the existing faculties determine what the graduate programs become. The Annenberg School, on the other hand, was the clean slate which Seldes had promised—as was the field of communications, in Gerbner's eyes—and he went at both zealously.

To describe what he had in mind at the time is to describe what the Annenberg School does, because, when he became dean, Gerbner carried out the idea he had had before. He describes it historically.

Human culture, he says, was once a handicraft. In the preindustrial era, tribal leaders, depending heavily on memory and ritual, told stories and interpreted them to their listeners, face-to-face; the listeners learned merely what pertained to their society and how to act in it.

The industrial era introduced books, "movable packages of consciousness," in Gerbner's words, which represent "a pretty big transformation in the way in which human beings find out who they are." Books free peoples from dependence on tribal leaders. They create notions of individuality and of class consciousness. (They also created a new order of people—the literate—and a new set of storytellers, who shaped reality in their stories to their own point of view.) Relatively stable groups, set off by geography, broke up and formed "mass publics," in which people share a particular consciousness without ever meeting face-to-face. During the last century, when the industrial revolution began to pour forth goods in earnest and such cultural symbols as books became mass-produced, human consciousness gradually became, as Gerbner puts it, "the product of a system of symbol mass-production."

> 'WHEN I FIRST CAME FOR MY INTERVIEW, I SAW NOTHING BUT OPPORTUNITY AT THE SCHOOL.'

The latest stage of this development is telecommunications. As immense an impact as books have on literate people, people still must learn to read; before they do, they absorb various messages from their culture. Television, a "tribal leader" because it seems to be personal and face-to-face (but actually is distant and centralized), creates an enormous, in some ways undifferentiated, "mass public" (the singular is crucial); it dominates the way people think and perceive as books never did, because it imposes a point of view before people even begin to develop one of their own. "You grow up from day one on," says Gerbner, "in a symbolic environment which is essentially produced by distant sources. It's like a religion, which represents an ideological structure of society—how people view the world, the nature of the universe and what governs it, and themselves.

"We, as a society, and perhaps most other societies, have not yet found a satisfactory solution to the management of an industrial culture." The problems which societies face because of the "industrialization of cultures," the application of sophisticated technology to forms of communication, are, he concludes, within the purview of the Annenberg School.

Gerbner recalls saying as much to the Hon. Walter H. Annenberg, *'31 W, '66 Hon*, the school's founder and benefactor, during an interview for the deanship. "He, in effect, said, 'Well, it sounds okay; try what you can do, and we'll see,'" adds Gerbner.

Annenberg, Gerbner says, wanted "to plow back benefits to the communications field that has been so good to him." To do that, he founded a nonprofit educational corporation. In December of 1958, Annenberg and Dr. Gaylord P. Harnwell, president of the University at the time, announced the establishment of Penn's Annenberg School of Communications, which opened in 1959. It was eventually housed in a new building dedicated to Moses L. Annenberg, Walter's father.

According to Gerbner, stock in Triangle Publications, a firm owned by the Annenberg family, has been turned over to the nonprofit educational corporation, which is presided over by Annenberg. It currently provides the school with about 60 per cent of its annual academic operating budget of $3.2 million. Like other deans at the University, Gerbner reports to the provost; he also reports to a committee composed of trustees from Penn and the corporation.

"Mr. Annenberg is a man of strong ideas and convictions, and one who doesn't hesitate to express them," says Gerbner, who estimates that the former Ambassador to the Court of St. James's disagrees with 20 to 30 per cent of what the school undertakes. "As the school developed and as he could see that the ideas that he occasionally expressed were taken into consideration—not as orders, but as ideas coming in from any knowledgeable and reputable source—and that we dealt with them in a professional way," says Gerbner, "and as the results began to come in, I think he began to respect, more and more, the independent, dynamic development of the school. He has always said that all he wants is excellence."

In a letter to the director of an offshoot of the school located in Washington, D.C., Annenberg wrote that the school "always has had and always will have complete and unconditional academic freedom. I have said many times that it is the academic prerogative and responsibility of educators to examine problems in a totally objective and unhampered manner." He also said he doubted whether Gerbner, among others, would be associated with the school "if that were not the case."

Gerbner's first task as dean was establishing a faculty. He preferred scholars from psychology or social psychology or anthropology or sociology or education or history who felt themselves on the fringes of their own disciplines and were willing to use communications to test theories in their home subjects or to apply those subjects to communications. "George likes eccentrics," says one observer, "and will give them a lot of rope to see what they can do against a larger ambition."

Gerbner also oversaw the creation of the Annenberg Center for Communication Arts and Sciences, the fancy name for

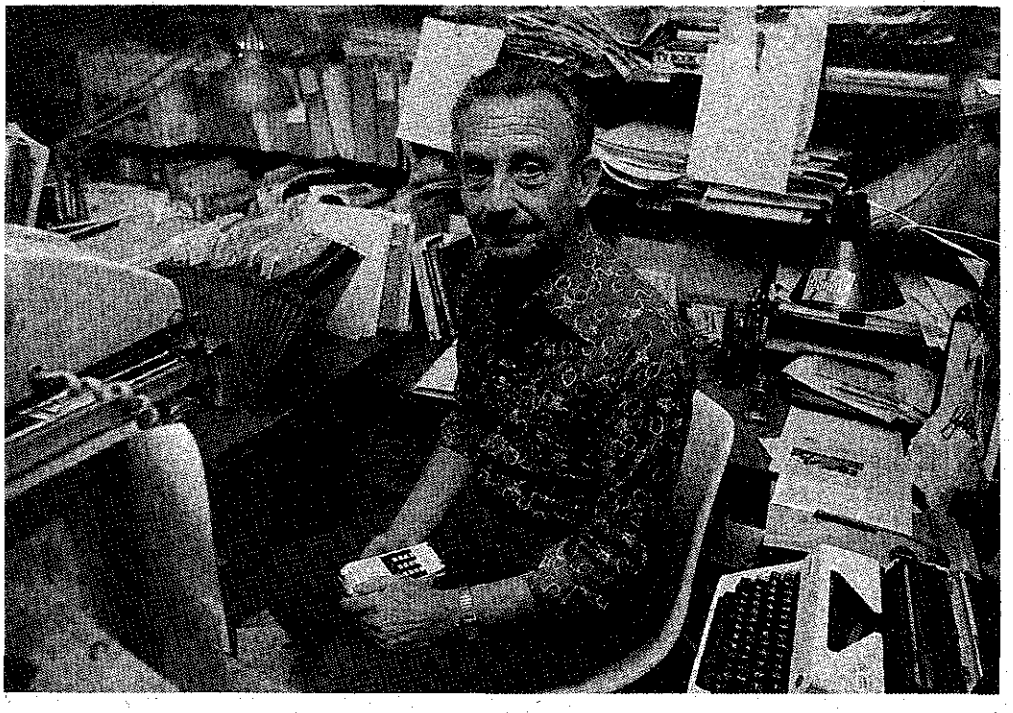
what has become one of Philadelphia's busiest performing arts centers. The building was completed in 1970. He withdrew from responsibility for the center in 1975. At one time, there were plans to offer a professional theater program as part of a master of arts in communications and to study the nature of the theatrical experience by, for instance, measuring audience response during live performances; the plans did not materialize.

Gerbner phased out the workshops in art which had been housed in the school when he arrived. Despite his own artistic inclinations—and one painter calls him "perhaps the best patron of art on the campus"—he seems not to have let those interests interrupt his idea of what the school should be. Some who conducted the workshops reportedly felt that they had been canned, but one artist says, "George seemed tender enough not to shatter my feelings" (as he was let go). This artist recalls that one of his students went into art professionally. Gerbner approached the teacher and said, in effect, "That is not the intention of the school. We are not competing with the design schools." The artist agreed, yet replied, "But if somebody turns out awfully good, I'm not going to discourage him." Without being testy about it, Gerbner reportedly responded, "I don't perfectly agree, because we do have to keep the school on course, but I do understand it."

At another time, Gerbner had asked the artist to remove a poster done by a student which was hanging in the hallway; it contained a dirty word, and important people would be traversing the hallway. The artist refused because the point of the project was to see whether print in poster form could inflame viewers. The artist was thinking of posters of the sort which appear in Europe and China, not ones using the cheap tactic of dirty words. Gerbner said something like, "It will cause me great embarrassment. I want to remind you that you have the right to do what you want. I've told you how I feel." The artist let it hang and heard nothing more from Gerbner. He says, "In a critical situation, when George could have been in a dilemma and given a suppressive order, he did not. I almost expected him to, because he is an authoritative person. But he has an intrinsic fairness."

Gerbner also had to tend to nurturing a generation of scholars trained in communications. It was a struggle, he says, to convince applicants that they should not come to Penn to become movie directors or reporters or television anchors. "They didn't read the bulletin, and if they did read it, they didn't believe it," says Gerbner. "They were shocked to discover that we meant every word that we said in the bulletin."

The current bulletin warns readers away from applying for "what can be learned in any program, in other fields, or on a job." It goes on to describe three "core" areas, in one of which the student is expected to make an original scholarly contribution: "codes and modes" (covering such topics as theories and models of information and communication, content analysis, and the social contexts of communication); behavior (including "encoding and decoding characteristics of sources and receivers," "the consequence of exposure to messages," and mass communication and socialization); and systems and institutions (history; theories of social and mass communications; public policy; and structure, management, and social functions of the media).



George Gerbner squeezes into his study, the only hint of chaos in his life.

Although the bulletin speaks of communications as a "new discipline," much of its core material was laid out by Gerbner decades ago. In 1956, he wrote an article called "Toward a General Model of Communication," which sketches much of the structure behind the core material. It is very schematized and is illustrated with circles and squares and connecting lines and arrows, and smacks of simplicity. But Gerbner did not have much to draw upon at the time. The bibliography for the article did not extend back more than nine years. And the *Zeitgeist* was not encouraging; in 1959, Bernard Berelson, a sociologist who applied behavioral science to communications, would declare that communications research was "withering away."

Gerbner defended the study of communications as "a potentially seminal, organizing discipline" and "a busy crossroads of many disciplines in science, art, education, engineering, and of a great deal of social and philosophical concept-building." He also insisted that his model was "value-oriented." The findings in the field would contribute to public policy in a society based on self-government, so that the heart of the issue was "freedom in industrial society," he said. He proceeded to argue that the Constitutional guarantee of a free press is designed "to safeguard the thinking process of the community" by assuring that all views and evidence on public issues have "equitable" distribution. He also argued for "necessary rules and controls" and stated that "there is no freedom of selection unless there is control over facilities to assure equitable distribution and availability."

When asked whether communications is a legitimate academic field, Gerbner replies by explaining what legitimates any field: "It has a budget and it can hire people, it's got journals, and it's got professional organizations," he says, his point being that, by meeting these criteria, fields become established and stay on as academic fixtures. Communications meets the criteria, so it is a field. But is it a discipline? Communications, he goes on to say, "is addressed to the nature and role of human interaction through messages, in life and society, whose understanding can make a contribution to the understanding of every human and social situation," implying that its potential contribution to knowledge turns it from a field into a discipline. It has a revered ancestor—rhetoric, effective eloquence.

Gerbner feels that communications has gained attention of late because of the "industrialization" of the process of communicating, the "cultural manipulation"

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by which relatively few people control and manage to mobilize masses of others—the "engineering of consent," he has called it. This capacity, chiefly because of its implications in a self-governing society, invites questions of policy, which, in turn, demand a scientific base, which scholars can provide. Mass communications is not the only part of the inquiry, he observes, but it is the part that directs attention to the fact that a field exists. Does it really stand alongside economics and sociology and history and other traditional areas of study? Gerbner

'AFTER ESTABLISHING A FIELD,' GERBNER OBSERVES, 'WE ARE NOW TRYING TO DEFINE IT.'

smiles and says, "I will compromise by saying that it is an emerging discipline."

The Annenberg School has some 130 students (enrollment was expected to have been about 100), and there is a danger that, graduating as specialists, the students will be less interesting than their teachers, who bring so much eclectic and interdisciplinary expertise to the classroom. "You have to have a coherent core; otherwise, you're going in too many directions. The boundaries should be flexible and loose, the core should be coherent," Gerbner insists. But he acknowledges the problem of turning out graduates who know more and more about less and less. He feels that he can stave it off by requiring them to take graduate courses outside the Annenberg School and by continuing to hire faculty with diverse interests and by drawing upon the Penn faculty at large (the school has an associated faculty of 24 scholars from elsewhere in the University). "Every discipline has the problem," he says, and he mentions another headache for the conscientious academician: that students take the field for granted and "don't try to rethink it and rediscover it all the time, questioning the reasons for its existence." Then he adds, "Being aware of the danger is about all we can do."

Gerbner teaches a seminar in which he tries, as he says, "to keep alive the original sense of challenge and excitement." Students have been heard to criticize him for using the classroom as a pulpit for his own ideas. "What professor doesn't?" says one of Gerbner's colleagues in his defense, adding this: Scholars like Gerbner who are experienced advisers to policymakers learn to state their conclusions and rationale confidently; naive or uncritical students may become swept up by the well-rehearsed presentation, only to complain later when they realize that they are not dealing with the subject matter on their own footing. Gerbner reportedly prefers students who challenge what he says; by doing so, they presumably find their own paths through the well-defined curriculum.

Early in the semester, Gerbner is introducing the students to the school's approach. He stands in front of the classroom, looking relaxed and teacherly, unjacketed, his shirt tieless and unbuttoned at the top. He speaks in low tones, peering through steel-rimmed glasses, and occasionally brushes back the edges of his hair, which is not out of place anyway. He covers a lot of ground (material; but he paces constantly, too). He asks the students what "communications" is ("You'll be asked; you should and will have answers"). He speaks of making "maps" of researchable problems. He speaks of types of codes or patterns ("nonrandom configurations" seen in large institutions or systems rather than in individuals). He talks about the dynamics of forming public policy, dynamics shaped by laws on the books as well as by laws implicit in social behavior. He talks about culture in the anthropological or sociological sense, in which it means the system of communication regulating social behavior. He gets concrete. He clears his throat. He asks whether the rasping sound he makes qualifies as communication (maybe it is a signal to a confederate to yell "Fire"—"so that we can do dirty work in the confusion"). He explains why an orator addressing 40,000 people in a Greek city-state is not engaged in mass communication: because the concept of *mass* is tied to a system of industrial production—of delivery—not to numbers. He goes on to differentiate between a community and a public and between a public and a mass public; and he describes the "manufacturing" of publics, which have "manufactured needs and interests." By the time class is dismissed, the blackboard is filled with notations about senders and receivers and participants and events, enclosed in boxes or circles and connected by solid and dotted lines and arrows. Before long, presumably, the students will be working on their original scholarly contributions.

Having begun from scratch, the school has been benefiting from a "multiplier" effect in recent years, according to Gerbner. Penn graduates are rising in the ranks of faculties in communications schools elsewhere. Its academic arm is extended in several directions. It cooperates with the College of Arts and Sciences in offering an undergraduate major in communications, and anywhere from 300 to 600 undergraduates take courses in the school each semester.

The school is extending physically as well. It is in the midst of a $9.6-million construction project, which will provide a new wing for faculty and administrative offices; audio-visually equipped classrooms and a gallery (both located under the Annenberg Plaza); and, in the thoroughly renovated main building, seminar rooms, space for film archives, film-editing, and analysis of film, as well as more space for computers and books.

The school has also sponsored national and international conferences on such topics as child abuse; public views of doctors and lawyers; and communications, technology, and social policy ("before it became the trendy topic it is today," says Gerbner). It is planning one on visual communication (it conducted a preliminary conference on "image ethics" in January). With the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Southern California, Penn's school has established a branch in Washington, D.C., which focuses on policy studies in communications; a major study on the implication of the A.T.&T. divestiture, called "Setting Telecommunications Policy for the '80s: The Transition to Competition," is expected in midyear.

Since 1973, the school has owned and published the *Journal of Communication*, an organ of the International Communication Association, the professional organization in the field. Last summer's issue had the length and substance of a book. It has a book-like title—"Ferment in the Field"—and contains 35 essays by scholars from 10 countries on the condition, goals, tactics, and strategies of research in communications—which no contributor thought was "withering away." The school also publishes the serial *Studies in Visual Communication.* And the school has joined with Longman to publish books on communications; the first, issued last year, is called *World Communications: A Handbook.*

Late last year, the school announced that, in conjunction with Oxford University Press, it will publish an "International Encyclopedia of Communications," a four-volume work which is expected to take five years to produce. It is billed as "the first comprehensive encyclopedia" for scholarship and practice in communications. "After having established a field," Gerbner observes, "we're now trying to define it."

(This concludes the first part of a two-part series.)