

Early Television

By David Shedden

People may never remember **Richard Hubbell**, or the small DuMont network, but if you were one of the few people in New York during 1941 with a television set, you could have watched his 15-minute program, *Richard Hubbell and the News*.

Hubbell was one of the first television news anchors. His small audience watched the show twice a week on New York's experimental CBS television station WCBW.

However, his early chapter in broadcast history came to an end with World War II. The emerging television industry was put on hold while the nation focused on the war.

Movie newsreels occasionally aired on TV during this period, but for the most part, radio reported the broadcast journalism stories from World War II.

Although radio networks had been in existence since the 1920s, large television networks really didn't start until 1948 when coaxial cable began connecting major TV markets.

One of the first things the network stations shared was news. During the late 1940s and early 1950s television viewers began watching the news on four television networks: NBC, CBS, ABC and DuMont.

These were the early days of television news. Keep in mind, that as of 1950, only nine percent of American homes had a television.

As NBC's John Chancellor once put it, "It was sort of a primitive caveman television that we were putting out at that time."

Don Hewitt from CBS said, "It was like a bunch of kids playing with Play Doh....We had no idea what we were doing in the early days. It was so horse and buggy and fun. Nobody knew what he was doing, but you didn't care because who had a television set?"

The Beginning of CBS Television News

The network's first regularly scheduled nightly newscast, the *CBS Television News*, was anchored by Douglas Edwards on August 15, 1948. A couple of years later the name was changed to *Douglas Edwards with the News*. This was the beginning of the *CBS Evening News* we know today.

Only five stations belonged to the CBS television network when Edwards began broadcasting the network evening news in 1948.

The Beginning of NBC Television News

A few stations around the country experimented with television programming during the 1930s. Periodically radio announcers would do voice-over work for TV news reports with wire copy and still photographs.

In the early 1940s New York station WNBT (formerly W2XBS) simulcast the Lowell Thomas radio program. The simulcast, titled the *Sunoco News*, was sponsored by the Sun Oil Company. NBC also aired the *Esso Television Reporter* before World War II brought a halt to most television news.

When the war ended in 1945, WNBT broadcast a weekly program called *NBC Tele-Newsreel* (or *NBC Telenews*) that used MGM-Hearst movie newsreel film.

Beginning in 1947, 20th-Century Fox / Movietone produced the daily *Camel Newsreel Theatre*. It was sponsored by the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company. The *NBC Television Newsreel* program started in 1948.

The Beginning of ABC Television News

If you were watching the ABC network on August 11, 1948, you might have seen their first regular newscast. They called it *News and Views*. H.R. Baukhage and Jim Gibbons served as the program's anchors.

In April 1951 the network began a new show, *After the Deadlines*.

The Beginning (and end) of DuMont Television News

From 1946 until 1956 the DuMont network was considered the fourth major television network. DuMont owned three TV stations in the late 1940s and early 1950s: New York's WABD; Washington, DC's W3XWT; and Pittsburgh's WDTV.

Because DuMont was so small it could experiment and be more innovative than the other networks. For example, they successfully used station-to-station coaxial cable hookups a couple of years before their competitors.

The *Walter Compton News* was the first news program on the DuMont network. Other news shows from DuMont included: *Camera Headlines*, *INS Telenews*, *Newsweek Analysis*, and the *DuMont Evening News*.

It was clear by 1955 that DuMont's days were numbered. By then their schedule was limited almost exclusively to sports. The final DuMont network telecast in August 1956 was not a newscast, but a boxing match.

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Frances Buss, Pioneer of Early Television

By BRUCE WEBER

Frances Buss, who at the dawn of commercial television parlayed a job as a temporary receptionist into a pioneering career as a director whose work helped establish the talk show, the game show and the cooking show as television staples.

On July 1, 1941, by declaration of the Federal Communications Commission, the era of commercial television broadcasting began, and it was that same month that Ms. Buss, an aspiring actress in New York, took the temporary job at CBS. By dint of her skills at drawing and mapmaking, and because of the poise she had developed as an actress, she

was asked to stay on, assisting in the production of what was then rudimentary news and features programming.

“I was put on the air almost right away,” she said, in a 2005 interview for the Archive of American Television, a video library compiled by the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences Foundation. “I was capable on my feet, my voice was audible — and I had good legs.”

Ms. Buss was the prototype for Vanna White; she held props and kept score for television’s first regularly broadcast game show, “CBS Television Quiz.” She was the M.C. — or “femcee,” in the showbiz lingo of the time — for a series of instructional shows demonstrating first aid; she was a dancer on “The Country Dance,” a sort of antediluvian “American Bandstand.”

On Dec. 7, 1941, she rushed to the studio in the Grand Central Terminal building to help with the news broadcast of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

“We didn’t have a decent map of the Hawaiian Islands and the Pacific Basin,” she recalled in a 2007 interview with the Paley Center for Media (formerly the Museum of Television & Radio). “Those of us who could helped draw crude maps and letter place names so that **Richard Hubbell**, our newscaster, could go on the air.” CBS suspended its programming for a time during the war.



TELEVISION

PROGRAMMING
AND PRODUCTION



Richard Hubbell

THIRD EDITION



A Founder of Modern TV Technique

RICHARD W. HUBBELL is one of the pioneers who built the art of television programming. In the original edition of this book, first published in 1945, he formulated for the first time the theories and techniques which are the foundation of modern program production. His book has become something of a classic in the field, and each successive printing and edition has been enlarged both in text and illustration.

After graduation from Wesleyan University and postgraduate study at Columbia, Mr. Hubbell entered broadcasting via the theatre and radio stations WQXR and WOR. During several years with CBS-TV in New York as a producer-director-writer and head of TV news he appeared in and produced some 1,000 TV shows.

He became a motion picture director for the March of Time, TV consultant for *Fortune* and *Life*, writer for N. W. Ayer advertising agency in New York, production manager and TV consultant of Crosley Broadcasting—WLW, Cincinnati, and head of his own firm which not only produced and distributed TV films but also assisted in planning and setting up numerous TV stations.

In 1951 he joined the U. S. Department of State to plan and set up The Voice of America television service. More recently he became general manager of a TV and radio station, a network executive, and is Vice President and General Manager of Carlos Franco Associates, advertising and world-wide marketing specialists.

RINEHART & COMPANY, INC.
232 Madison Avenue, New York 16, N. Y.

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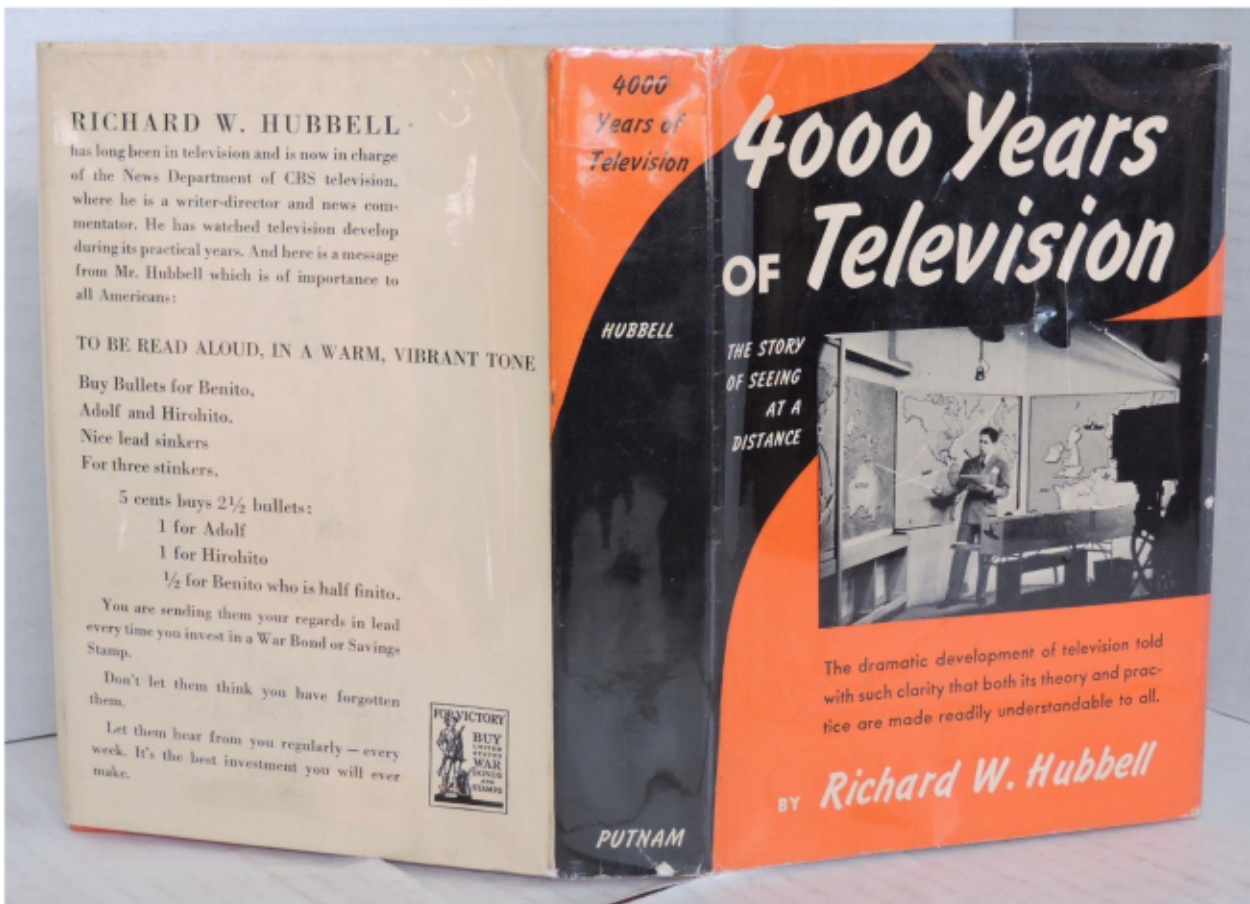
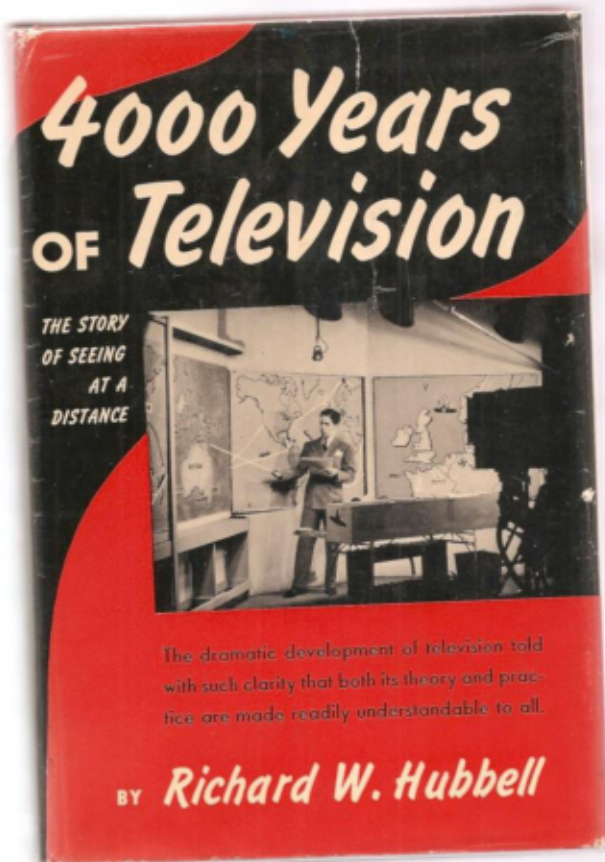
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RICHARD W. HUBBELL

has long been in television and is now in charge of the News Department of CBS television, where he is a writer-director and news commentator. He has watched television develop during its practical years. And here is a message from Mr. Hubbell which is of importance to all Americans:

TO BE READ ALOUD, IN A WARM, VIBRANT TONE

Buy Bullets for Benito,
Adolf and Hirohito.
Nice lead sinkers
For three stinkers.

5 cents buys 2½ bullets:
1 for Adolf
1 for Hirohito
½ for Benito who is half finito.

You are sending them your regards in lead every time you invest in a War Bond or Savings Stamp.

Don't let them think you have forgotten them.

Let them hear from you regularly — every week. It's the best investment you will ever make.



4000
Years of
Television

HUBBELL

PUTNAM

4000 Years OF Television

THE STORY
OF SEEING
AT A
DISTANCE



The dramatic development of television told with such clarity that both its theory and practice are made readily understandable to all.

BY *Richard W. Hubbell*

printed in 1942 by Putnam's Sons, New York. 256 pp.



A SUGAR BEET IS PRESENTED TO NEW YORK TELEVISION AUDIENCE

Mr. Richard Hubbell of C.B.S. Television News gives the city folk a chance to see the most important single source of sugar for the United States. Something like two beets this size will make up an eight-ounce weekly ration,