Column/Diana ben-Aaron

One day in the placement office

One day last term, I was hanging around the Career Planning and Placement Office between classes when I ran into a senior I knew. "I think you should do a story on the pitfalls of interviewing," said the senior. "I'm sure you could talk to a few interviewers and they'd all have lots of anecdotes and horror stories about their interviews."

"Firely translated. the senior wanted to tell me about her interview, I asked what her experience had been. "Well, for instance," she said, with exaggerated casualness, "one interviewer was supposed to take me to lunch and when we got to the restaurant, the dining room was full. The waitress said we could order from the same menu and eat in the bar."

"We went into the bar," said the senior, "and the walls were covered from floor to ceiling with pictures of naked women. And we had lunch there and he interviewed me over lunch. Surrounding us were pictures of naked women. I was never so humiliated in my life!"

I expressed outrage and the senior continued. "Also, one interviewer was supposed to pick me up at the hotel, take me to breakfast, and show me the plant. He showed up at the plant, be my host for the day. We got to breakfast and he ordered a vodka highball. A vodka highball! So I couldn't have a full breakfast, because he was only having a vodka highball. But I was starving, so I asked for coffee and a croissant. While he was drinking his vodka highball, I... (Please see page 3)

Column/Robert E. Malchman

Finding "TV On Trial" guilty

"What is called a sincere work is one that is endowed with enough strength to give really to an illusion." - Max Jacobs

"Now Arthur's kind of shy, but the stage manager before the taping began, "He gets really nervous, so we really want to make him feel welcome. He's going to come out after all the others, and when he does, let him have a really big hand. In fact, let's give him a standing O.""

"Arthur is Professor Arthur Miller of "Miller's Court" and Harvard Law School fame. He has worked on television for some time and regularly addresses large audiences during his academic lectures. It makes one wonder, then, why his stage manager would need to give this audience a smile so perfectly reserved for Born's Clown's five-year-old."

There is one certainty about who you see on television: It is never what it appears to be. It is, first, last and always, a business, and it will never operate in the public interest unless an accountant says so to do. It is nonetheless still shocking whenever this fundamental truth is perpetrated sometimes like the系列活动 of the week of TV, which Miller hosted. The show purported to be a public-interest forum consisting of critics, academics, station general managers and a studio audience representing "you, the public." The group would receive local selection, assessing its strengths and weaknesses. The panelists would air their views, and the studio audience would make "your, the public's" concerns heard.

The panelists were television critics Jan Baker of The Boston Herald, Terry Ann Knef of The Portland Ledger, and Jack Thomas and Ed Sigal of The Boston Globe. Professor Edwina Diano of MIT and Marty Linky from Harvard, and station general managers by Yaffol from WNEV, channel 7, Tom Goodgame from WZB, channel 5, and Jim Coprnsmith from WCVB.

The show's format consisted of questions by Miller and responses from the panel. Frequently there were follow-up questions from Miller or the panel. At the end the audience was able to ask a few questions. The most striking thing about the taping was the almost brutal hypocrisy and cynicism. It began with the stage manager warming up the audience with jokes, banter, humorous introductions and a somber tone found usually only among television weathermen. Why does a public-interest show need a warm-up? The producers reviewed the questions from the audience. They then asked a half dozen audience members to ask their questions on camera. If the person who originally proposed a question did not want to read it, someone else was asked to read the question. Fewer than half of the questions asked on camera appeared in the aired version.

One audience question that survived editing came from Stanley Frankenstein, director of the Community Media Project at Tufts University. What he asked was not important, but he praised his remarks with glowing praise for General Manager Coprnsmith and WCVB for airing a program like "TV On Trial."

I asked Frankenstein after the taping how he could praise Coprnsmith for re-broadcasting an in-service program. He said the program did "more good than bad" and that it "gives people to think." A question that did not appear on the air came from a boy sitting behind me. The producers asked him to ask his question on camera. He plaintively agreed and got up to wait with the other questions. A moment later though, they told him they had a better question from someone else and would be mindlessly relinquishing his place.

The boy said, no, he did not mind, and returned his seat, but he obviously did. One wonders about the sensitivity of people who would take away a chance to be on television from a young boy who to whom they obviously meant a lot. The producers had something "better," so to heck with anything else in their way... (Please see page 3)