

Richard Nixon and Me on TV

James A. Herrick

Television trivia time. What famous American politician of the past made the following statement in an important televised speech?

“I should say this, that Pat doesn't have a mink coat. But she does have a respectable Republican cloth coat, and I always tell her she would look good in anything.”

OK, getting the politician was easy. Can anyone name the speech, and the year, and the office Nixon was running for? How about Pat Nixon's real first name? It wasn't Patricia. It was Thelma. Her maiden name was Thelma Ryan, and Nixon met her while working for her father in California.

I'm illustrating a point here. You see, when you don't have a television set, you have to find a lot of things to fill your time. And, for me, a student of the great traditions of religious and political oratory, reading old speeches is one of the things I do to fill the time. Now, doesn't that sound like fun?

Well, the other evening I was re-reading one of Richard Nixon's old speeches, his 1952 speech officially titled “My Side of the Story,” but dubbed by the media the Checkers Speech. I know what you're thinking—this guy really needs a TV. Well, perhaps, but the famous line I just quoted comes from a truly great speech, a masterpiece of political defense filled with carefully selected argumentative techniques, skillfully employed debating tactics, and powerful emotional appeals. After all, Nixon had been an outstanding student at Duke Law School and was a brilliant high school and college debater whose coach once said, “He's so good it scares me.”

A little background on the speech itself. As the Vice Presidential candidate on the Republican ticket, Nixon was required by presidential candidate Dwight Eisenhower to defend himself publicly against the charge, first leveled in a *New York Post* story that came out in early September of that year, that Nixon had spent money from an \$18,000 fund (notice the amount that was setting off alarm bells in 1952), set up by supporters. Specifically, he was accused of having used the money for personal expenses, and returned political favors for the donations. Nixon chose, quite astutely, to have his now immortal Checkers Speech broadcast on the relatively new medium of television. The stakes were very high—if the speech failed, Ike told Nixon, he was off the ticket. But, the speech was a smashing success. Switchboards in Washington DC were jammed for 24 hours with calls supportive of Nixon. When they next met following the speech, Eisenhower greeted Nixon with these famous words—“Dick, you're my boy.”

The Checkers speech takes its name from a memorable passage in which Nixon, via the emotionally potent medium of television, tugged hard on the nation's heart strings, and admitted that, though he had *not* misspent the \$18,000, he *had* received an unreported gift from a supporter in Texas. I'll come back to that famous passage a little later.

I begin with this nod to Richard Nixon for two reasons. The first is that he, before almost anyone else, recognized the tremendous power of television to shape our thinking and grip our emotions. That has always been a part of my concern about television as well.

My second reason is somewhat more, well, mysterious. As I sat there in my basement at midnight re-reading the Checkers Speech, which I have watched on video-tape many times and even own an old LP of, I began to recognize some bizarre similarities between my own life and the life of this famous ex-President.

So, with your indulgence, I want to weave these two themes together—my life without television, and the uncanny similarities between myself and Richard Nixon, he the embattled opponent of Communist influence in the American State Department, myself the embattled opponent of commercial television's influence in the American living room.

On the evening of September 23, 1952, Nixon, before a vast television and radio audience, accounted for what some people alleged were suspicious actions on his part. And he felt that in order to do that, he had to take his audience deep into his own past. This is Nixon speaking: "And so now, what I am going to do—and incidentally this is unprecedented in the history of American politics—I am going at this time to give to this television and radio audience, a complete financial history, everything I have earned, everything I have spent and everything I own, and I want you to know the facts. I will have to start early, I was born in 1913." Indeed, that is starting early.

Well, like my fellow native-Californian, Richard Nixon, I've often been asked to account for what some people allege is a somewhat suspicious decision I made years ago—the peculiarly un-American decision to live life without a television set in my home.

This is unprecedented in the history of American communication—I am going at this time to give to this audience, a complete television history, everything I have watched, every time I have tuned in, and every time I have tuned out, and I want you to know the facts. I will have to start early, I was born in Fresno, California in 1954. I grew up in a pretty typical post-war Central California family. My Dad and Mom moved to California from South Dakota in the early 50's and, like a lot of other people from the Dakotas and Oklahoma and Arkansas, purchased a \$12,000 tract home in a sunny subdivision, figuring that, compared to Depression-era dust-bowl South Dakota, this was paradise.

Now, quoting Nixon again from the Checkers Speech: "Our family was one of modest circumstances, and most of my early life was spent in a store out in East Whittier. It was a grocery store, one of those family enterprises. The only reason we were able to make it go was because my mother and dad had five boys, and we all worked in the store."

Here's one of those similarities I was referring to. My parents did not own a grocery store, but my early life certainly was one of modest circumstances. (As a matter of fact, with four kids and one professor's salary, my life still is one of modest circumstances.) My father taught elementary school, being lured to California from Sioux Falls, SD by the princely starting salary

of \$2,400 a year. My mother was a homemaker who also had been a schoolteacher in Sioux Falls, and who, like Pat Nixon, wore, not mink, but respectable cloth coats. I am afraid, however that both Mom and Dad, being Humphrey Democrats who grew up near the Minnesota border, had voted for Adlai Stephenson in 1952. And, though they may have liked Ike, neither of them ever learned to really like Richard Nixon. My Dad liked that old joke about a séance in which the spirit of Will Rogers is conjured up, and Rogers says, “I don’t like Richard Nixon.”

Another uncanny similarity between myself and Nixon, and there are, as I said, many—neither of us was ever elected Governor of California. Nixon was defeated in his bid for that office in 1962, and I never ran for governor of California. By the way, it was this loss to Pat Brown—whose real first name was Edmund—that led to Nixon’s famous statement to the California press, “You won’t have Richard Nixon to kick around any more.”

Nixon left California that year, moved to New York City and joined a large law firm. I left the state of California seventeen years later in 1979 to join a large academic department, the Department of Communication Arts at the University of Wisconsin, as a graduate student. And, so, after 1979 California did not have either of us to kick around any more.

So, like Richard Nixon, I grew up in California, and I was one of five kids in a financially strapped family in which everyone had to pitch in. And, though I didn’t mention it before, I, like Nixon, worked at the local grocery store to help pay for college. Neither of us was ever governor of California, and, like Nixon, we both left California for the east, well, OK, the mid-west. I should add that Nixon’s favorite food was meatloaf with catsup, which I also loved. And his favorite salad was cottage cheese with catsup, so he was a real fan of catsup. Again, the fact that Nixon trivia is so interesting to me may suggest to you that maybe I should get a TV.

Getting back to television. I have to admit, I watched a lot of television while growing up in California, just a few hours north of Hollywood and Disney Land. In fact, I pretty much structured my life around what my South Dakota farm-girl mother disdainfully called—and I just love this term—“the idiot box.” That may have shaped my attitude toward TV—I don’t know.

As a young child I was especially drawn to the great family shows like *Leave it to Beaver*. Ward and June Cleaver would sit in their comfortable den and discuss privately, before millions of viewers, the boys’ issues. June would start things off by saying, “Ward, I’m worried about the boys.” And, of course, Eddie Haskell was always up to no good, trying, albeit unsuccessfully, to corrupt Beaver and Wally. I also loved *Andy of Mayberry*, with Opie and Aunt Bee and the great comic genius Don Knotts doing Deputy Barney Fife. Andy would give Barney one bullet which he was not allowed to keep in his gun.

For some reason I was also very fond of the variety shows like *Ted Mack’s Original Amateur Hour*, sponsored by Sominex, the sleeping pill. I still find myself sometimes singing that sleep-inducing jingle—Take Sominex tonight and sleep, safe and restful, sleep, sleep, sleep. As a six-year-old I would listen to that little song and I was out like a light. Ted Mack had another sponsor called Serutan, which I believe was a product like Metamusil. You may remember their advertising slogan: Serutan is Natures spelled backwards. You could get away with that kind of thing in 1960.

Now, another similarity to Richard Nixon strikes me at this point. Nixon recognized the power of a loveable dog to heighten emotional response in a television audience. In fact, that's how the Checkers Speech got its name. Here is that famous passage:

“One other thing I probably should tell you, because if I don't they will probably be saying this about me, too. We *did* get something, a gift, after the election. A man down in Texas heard Pat on the radio mention the fact that our two youngsters would like to have a dog, and, believe it or not, the day before we left on this campaign trip we got a message from Union Station in Baltimore, saying they had a package for us. We went down to get it. You know what it was? It was a little cocker spaniel dog, in a crate that he had sent all the way from Texas, black and white, spotted, and our little girl Tricia, the six-year-old, named it Checkers. And you know, the kids, like all kids, loved the dog, and I just want to say this, right now, that regardless of what they say about it, we are going to keep it.”

The Nixons had the little cocker spaniel that six-year-old Tricia Nixon named Checkers, and who Richard Nixon made famous on TV. Well, my life as a six-year-old would have been incomplete without the emotionally charged television programs about dogs, such as Lassie and Rin Tin Tin.

Now, in my youthful television viewing, the similarities to Richard Nixon do not stop. Here's another passage from the Checkers Speech, in which Nixon alludes to his war record. Starting as a lieutenant, he had risen to the rank of lieutenant commander in the US Navy. Nixon said this about his service record, “Then in 1942 I went into the service. Let me say that my service record wasn't a particularly unusual one. I went to the South Pacific, I guess I'm entitled to a couple of Battle Stars, I got a couple of letters of commendation; but I was just there when the bombs were falling.”

I was not there when the bombs were falling, but my father served in the South Pacific in the Navy during World War II. And, in high school, I had the lead part of Emile DeBeck in, you guessed it, South Pacific. And, I loved the television shows based on WWII, dramas like Combat and 12 O'clock High, and military comedies like Hogan's Heroes, and McHale's Navy.

Perhaps what I'm saying is, that as a child, I was enamored of television. Nixon, also, was initially enamored of television, seeing in it the potential to advance his political goals. However, following his disastrous televised debate with the handsome and charismatic John F. Kennedy in 1960, Nixon's love of television waned, and Nixon's relationship to TV changed forever.

Similarly, when I began college in 1972—just twelve years later—two things happened that changed my relationship to TV forever. First, I started thinking about the meaning of life, which you are supposed to do in college. And one night in the dorms at Fresno State I was watching a television program called The Don Rickles Show. You know, Don Rickles, the comedian who got laughs by insulting people? Mr. Warmth. The Merchant of Venom. The man who famously called other people “hockey pucks.” Well, the Rickles show had a fascinating opening. A voiceover would come on the air and proclaim, and I quote, “We invite you to spend the next half hour of your life with Don Rickles.” That moment was an epiphany for me, the television-

addicted 19 year old. I thought, “You know, they are right. That’s what I’m doing. Doling out my life, one half hour at a time, to these television shows.”

The other shaping event came in a communication class I was taking around the same time. I chose to do a research paper on the topic of advertising on children’s television. The more I read about the idea of aiming advertisements at kids, and the television industry’s resistance to being regulated on this score, the more disillusioned I became with the whole industry I had grown up practically worshipping.

So, this odd combination of a communication class and Don Rickles led me to say, that’s it, I’m not watching any more TV. And, that was pretty much the end of my television fixation. And, I found that I didn’t miss it. In fact, I became an outspoken opponent of the medium

When Nixon delivered the Checkers Speech, he chose to have Pat sit quietly in a chair just to his right. Most of the time she was off camera, but at a couple of crucial junctures the camera turned slowly to Pat Nixon, who did not move a muscle. This was one of those crucial junctures. Nixon said, in relating his life story: “In 1940, probably the best thing that ever happened to me happened. I married Pat who is sitting over here.”

Here’s another one of those weird similarities I keep referring to. In 1979 probably the best thing that every happened to me happened. I married Janet, who is sitting over here.

Something, undoubtedly, drew Pat to Richard, and, similarly, Janet to Jim. In Janet’s case, she had noticed that I didn’t watch TV. Well, maybe this wasn’t the basis of our relationship, but it didn’t hurt, either. She had grown up in a strictly religious home where her parents forbade TV, so they just didn’t have one. I, on the other hand, was a reformed television addict. It was a marriage made in Heaven. I had learned to loath TV, and she had never learned to love it. That was easy, we just never bought a TV.

The Nixons had two daughters, Tricia and Julie. Well, Janet and I also have two daughters—Laura and Alicia, and their dog is named, not Checkers but Dollie. Now, if Richard Nixon and I are as similar as I think we are, then he didn’t actually like Checkers any more than I like Dollie. She barks at our friends and sheds on the couch, and is generally a nuisance. But every time I suggest that we have her stuffed and mounted, I get a huge protest from the girls. By the way, Checkers died in 1964 at the age of 12. Dollie is now only 5.

Janet and I also have two sons, Daniel and Stephen. Our first child, Dan, now a freshman at Kenyon College in Ohio, was born in 1983. Janet and I never really discussed the issue of TV until our kids started school. And, I must say, it has been interesting. We have now had quite a few family discussions about this peculiarity of the Herricks, especially after the kids started school and found out that other kids had TVs that they watched a lot. We had for a long time just pretended TV did not exist, and if the kids asked what a television was, we just said, “Never heard of it.” But you can only get away with that for about five years.

There have been some kind of funny episodes over the past eighteen years as well. For instance, there was the time when I overheard my two young sons, about 10 and 12 at the time, in the back

seat of the station wagon after a shopping trip during which they had specifically asked to visit certain stores. “Yeah, K-mart has good cartoons,” Dan said to Steve, “but Witmark has better sports programs.”

Ah, television, our national dilemma. It provides us a window on a larger world, but many of us have some reservations about it, discomfort with its enormous influence over us and our children and grandchildren. But, we watch it, and we love it. We are a nation of television viewing people. That, perhaps more than anything else, is what characterizes the members of this wonderfully diverse American melting pot where more and more of us have less and less in common. Somewhere between 98 and 99% of American households own television sets. And, the people behind the Nielsen ratings tell us that, on average the television is on in these households for six or seven hours each day.

The average American adult spends about 40% of his or her leisure time watching TV. Many adults actually spend 70 to 80% of their leisure time in front of a television set. Subtract the time spent working, sleeping, and commuting—say 17 hours in a day—and most of us spend half or more of the remaining 7 hours in front of the television set. Figures like this led Nicholas Johnson, former Head of the Federal Communications Commission to comment that “the most accurate inscription we could put on a typical American’s grave marker would be, ‘She watched television.’”

Most *children* watch four or five hours of television each day, many watch much more. They start watching at around age 2, and don’t ever stop. And studies show that the majority of this viewing is not monitored for content by adults. A few years ago I gave a talk to about fifty parents at a PTA meeting on television. I asked this group of about 70 highly responsible parents how many of them monitored what their kids watched on TV. To my surprise, only seven or eight hands went up. More than 50% of American kids have TVs in their rooms, and I read in one source that about 70% of day care centers have television sets turned on and in use during a typical day.

The typical American child is in school for about 900 hours each year, with summers and weekends off. The same child watches television for 1600 hours each year, with no days off. A recent survey of American households concluded that that same typical American child spends, on average, just six minutes in conversation with a parent each day. Five hours of television viewing versus six minutes of conversation with a parent each day. 66% of American households watch TV while eating dinner, so very little conversation occurs even at the dinner table, the traditional place for families to meet and talk. Some studies have shown that considerably less conversation occurs between parents and children when the television is turned on than when it is not. One study states, “One reason may be that it is difficult to converse during a program without losing the thread of the program; broadcast television is not well-suited to interaction.”

This is one of our main reasons for not having a television—it gobbles up what little family time you have, and cuts into conversations rather dramatically. However, if you don’t have a TV, you have also got to make a commitment to talk with your kids a lot, and to find them quite a few other activities to fill their time.

This is the biggest challenge—finding enough activities for the kids who are not sitting in front of the television. For us, this has boiled down to two kinds of activities—reading and music. Our kids are great readers and lovers of books. The problem has been finding enough books to read. And, believe it or not, we have done a lot of reading out loud as a family. While they were growing up, I read dozens of books to our two boys, about a half hour almost every evening. Daniel once estimated that he, Stephen and I read over a hundred books out loud together, ranging from Dr. Seuss to C. S. Lewis to their favorite, the British humorist P. G. Wodehouse. Janet still reads every night to our two girls, who are now 11 and 14. And, when kids turn to reading, you have to constantly be on the lookout for good children’s books. And, that means you are at the library constantly—and you don’t always get the books back on time. I am convinced that they call it the Herrick District Library because we paid for the renovations with our overdue fines.

Music has also become a big part of our lives. Dan plays the piano, Steve the cello, Laura the viola and piano, and Alicia the violin and piano. Janet plays the viola as well. What are the odds against having two viola players in one household? When you don’t have a TV, anything is possible. We are very sensitive to viola jokes around the house. Other members of the orchestra can be very hard on violists. A violin teacher at the college told me this one: What’s the difference between a viola and a lawnmower? Vibrato. A student of mine who plays the oboe told me this one: What’s the difference between a viola and an onion? Nobody cries when you chop up a viola.

Making music a substitute for TV has involved spending a great deal of money on lessons and instruments. It got to the point where I started comparing the costs of big-ticket items in our lives to the cost of instruments and lessons. So, for example, our son Stephen had to have braces a few years ago. This isn’t unusual. But when the orthodontist told me how much it would cost, I experienced sticker shock. When Stephen actually got the braces, and we brought him home, I said, “Smile. I want to see what I just paid for.” So, he smiled. And I was looking at all these little wires and rubber bands. And I turned to Janet and said, “He’s got a piano and a cello in his mouth.”

Back to television, in addition to its tendency to gobble up time for conversation, I have some other concerns. As you are no doubt aware, the content of television programs has, as the saying goes, gone South. Even though the focus of television critics is usually on TV content, my main argument against television has nothing to do with the content of TV shows. My biggest concern has always been the advertising.

A typical 5-year-old, starting at age two, has watched about 6,000 hours of television before entering school. That same child has also watched more than 100,000 television commercials for products such as cereal, games, vitamins, clothes, and a host of other products. If you watched 4 hours of prime-time television a day for a year, which is not unusual at all, you would watch about 45,600 advertisements for products during that year, 450,000 commercials in ten years, 3,500,000 commercials in a lifetime. That’s a lot of commercials.

What is the most frequently repeated experience in the life of a typical American child? Is it getting up in the morning and getting ready for school? Is it eating a meal with his family? Is it playing a game with friends? Actually, one could argue that the most frequently repeated experience in the life of most American children is watching a television commercial. And the message of all this commercial watching, it seems to me, is that consumption of products is the goal of life. This is a message kids get often enough without hearing it hundreds of times each day on television. And now, according to a Wall Street Journal article out just today, the big television studios want to make advertising a part of the educational TV programs aimed at pre-schoolers. This has usually been seen as either off limits, or unprofitable. “Disney estimates that annual US sales of preschool products ... including everything from videos to one piece pajamas, now top \$21 billion dollars.” This makes advertising to the 3 and 4 year old crowd quite lucrative, but will likely also compromise the content of programs that had been a protected area in the wasteland of commercial television.

I do have one other big concern, and it does relate to television content—violence. The American Academy of Pediatrics now says that a thousand studies link violent television content to violent behavior by children. You may have seen this link reported in the local papers just a couple of days ago—as little as one hour of television viewing a day is correlated with increased levels of aggression in kids.

There is some good news about television violence. A study out of Stanford University one year ago states, and I quote, “aggressive behavior can actually be ‘unlearned’ if children limit their use of TV, videos and electronic games.” The report continues, “After a six-month experiment, researchers report that children who reduced their TV time to seven hours a week [one hour a day] and stuck to less-violent videos and games were half as likely as their peers to engage in bellicose playground behavior like taunting and teasing. The most combative kids at the start of the study showed the most behavioral improvement by the end.” This is from Time Magazine, February 20, 2001.

Perpetrators of violence go unpunished in 73% of all violent scenes on television. So, kids may learn that violence is a successful way of dealing with problems. It has also been observed in studies of television that “47% of violent interactions show no harm to victims, and 58% show no pain.” And, only 16% of violent episodes portray the long-term negative effects of violence, such as psychological, financial or emotional harm.

While on the topic of television program content, the sexual content of television programs, like the violence content, has been steadily rising in recent years. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation study recently released found that, and I quote, “two out of every three shows on TV include sexual content, an increase from about half of all shows during the 1997/98 television season.” Three out of four prime time shows, 75%, included sexual content.

It is important to add here that the audience for these prime time shows is made up of adults *and* children. Most television viewing by children 8 and older occurs during primetime, from 7 to 10 p.m., and not during so called children’s viewing hours in the early afternoon. In other words, most kids do most of their TV watching during hours featuring shows made for adults.

Another statement from the Kaiser Foundation report is important here: “TV’s sexual messages clearly play a part [in influencing adolescent sexual development] helping not only to inform young people, but also to shape their ideas of what other people their age are doing, saying and thinking.” And, only 10% of the shows that contain sexually suggestive scenes say anything about the risks associated with teenage sexual activity.

So, both the commercial structure of television, and content are worthy of careful attention by parents, and some educational efforts in families.

So, what about families that dump the TV. In a recent survey of 500 families without TV, nearly half of the parents in these homes read 30 minutes or more to their kids each day. Compare this to the national average of six minutes of conversation between a child and a parent each day. 83% of parents in these families felt that going without television led to an improvement in their children’s academic work. 70% of parents reported that their children got along better with one another in the absence of television.

In closing, I thought you might be interested in hearing a little from our children about their experience growing up without television. I asked each of them about the best and worst parts of this unusual aspect of their own childhoods in preparation for this talk. Here is our 14-year-old daughter, Laura, an 8th grader at East Middle School:

Laura: All my friends talk about things that they have seen on television and how funny they are and I don’t get to talk about them. But, lots of the things I hear my friends talking about don’t sound very appropriate. I’m glad I haven’t seen some of those things. I don’t see how I would have time to watch television if I had one. I have sports, homework, youth group, all that stuff. Actually, now I’m kind of a celebrity at East Middle for not having a TV. I do not wish that we had had a TV while I was growing up. But I would like to be able watch the Olympics, super bowl, and NCAA championships. But, watching these things at other people’s houses was fun.

What Laura is referring to here is that we often try to wrangle an invitation to a friend’s house to watch a special event. That is one of the odd aspects of not having a TV, and it comes up about once or twice a year—during the Super Bowl and when the Olympics are on. How are we going to sort of hint to our good friends—usually Ralph and Lynne Edgington who have a really nice TV—that they should invite us over for the evening.

Here is Alicia, age 11: What I don’t like is all these shows my friends talk about and I have no idea what they are talking about. What I like is all of the attention I get at school. The kids are amazed that we don’t have a TV. I asked Alicia, “What are some typical reactions to the idea of not having a TV?” “They say, ‘How can you live without one?’ or ‘That’s why you’re so smart.’ or ‘What do you do all the time?’ I say, “I read a lot.” She adds, “Saturday morning cartoons might be a fun thing to do. And, you know Dad, we sort of have to invite ourselves over to the Edgington’s. And we can’t do that every night of the Olympics, so we miss a lot of the Olympics.

Alicia adds, “I probably will have a TV when I grow up. But I probably wouldn’t want my kids to watch very much TV.”

Our son Steve is 17, and a voracious reader: He says, “I don’t think there was anything really bad about growing up without a television set. The best thing was that I read a lot of books. I never felt that I was missing out for not having a TV. In elementary school people talked about TV a lot, and I got made fun of. But in Middle School people said they actually envied me for not having a TV.

When I first told my friend Jon that I did not have a TV, he said, “You’re not missing much.” I used to feel drawn to watching TV at friends’ houses, but not anymore.

And, finally, our oldest son Dan: I have no regrets about growing up without a TV. I really value the experience. That’s the reason I have done so well in school, and why I scored so high on the SAT. I am able to read so well, and understand what I read, because we didn’t watch TV.

Now, I’m being quite transparent with you tonight, letting you look inside our family. Which reminds me of another passage in Nixon’s Checkers speech. I quote: “It isn’t easy to come before a nation-wide audience and bare your life, as I have done. Why do I feel so deeply? Why do I feel that in spite of the smears, the misunderstanding, that it is necessity for a man to come up here and bare his soul? And I want to tell you why. Because, you see, I love my country.”

Well, maybe that’s one of my reasons, too. Maybe I think we’d all be better off if we examined more closely our television viewing habits.

In his Checkers Speech, Richard Nixon read a heart-rending letter from a young woman whose husband was serving in the Merchant Marines in Korea. This young woman, nineteen years old and with a two-month old baby, wrote the following line to Nixon: “I feel confident that with great Americans like you and General Eisenhower in the White House, lowly Americans like myself will be united with their loved ones now in Korea.”

A few years ago I also received a letter from a young woman in Indiana. She had read an editorial I wrote that showed up in the Chicago Tribune. She wrote the following, among other things. “Professor Herrick, you should give up your mindless crusade against television and just let people enjoy their TV in peace.” Mindless crusade against television?

While we’re on this topic, a so-called friend in the Communication Department at Calvin College, after reading an essay on TV I wrote for the Christian Reformed Church publication called the Banner a few years ago, sent me a three word e-mail. It read, and I quote: “You are wrong!” A television executive from Chicago, on reading one of my editorials against TV, said to me face-to-face when he visited Hope College: “Get in touch with reality, man. TV is here to stay!”

Ladies and Gentlemen, these sound like smears to me, so let me quote Richard Nixon again from the Checkers Speech. “Now let me say this: I know this is not the last of the smears. In spite of my explanation tonight, other smears will be made. ... And the purpose of the smears, I know, is

this, to silence me, to make me let up. But I continue to fight because I know I am right, and I can say to this great television and radio audience that I have no apologies to the American people ... And as far as this is concerned, I intend to continue to fight.” Well ladies and gentlemen, so do I.

One last word from Richard Nixon. Pointing to Pat, he said in closing that famous speech, “Pat is not a quitter. After all, her name is Patricia Ryan and she was born on St. Patrick's day, and you know the Irish never quit.” Well, I’m not a quitter either, and neither is Janet, but it is probably time that I stopped talking.

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