

**Television:  
Human Killer**

by  
**Peter Eastvold**

**Dr. Heidi Farrah  
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Through the 1800s, the telegraph and the telephone revolutionized communication by allowing written and spoken word to immediately traverse vast distances. Messages once taking weeks to be delivered were suddenly transferred in a number of minutes. It was a technological advance as astounding today's internet. Then around the 1880s, several forward thinking scientists and inventors began trying ideas most citizens could not begin to comprehend. What if instead of relaying people's voices over electrical lines, we transferred live moving images of what they were doing and saying? In present day, I might compare this to how futuristic it would sound to have a real working model of Star Trek's holodeck. †

In 1883, German scientist Paul Nipkow invented a mechanical scanning device that could break an image into tiny elements and convert their light properties into electrical impulses. For the next 40-some years inventors toyed with Nipkow's device, but the mechanism could never produce a very clear picture. RCA and GE made early demonstrations of the technology and predicted it would become as big as radio, yet it was still a hokey mechanical apparatus. In 1905, Karl Braun discovered he could change the trajectory of electrons by subjecting them to magnetic fields in a cathode-ray tube (CRT) and in 1907, English scientist Alan Campbell Swinton proposed using it for the receiving end of a television. In the aftermath of World War I, Vladimir Zworykin

developed a crude working electronic TV system, which would be showcased 16 years later at the 1939 World's Fair.

Philo T. Farnsworth, a farm boy from Idaho, was 14 before he even knew electricity existed. In a genius-like leap of intellect, he expanded his understanding of electrical concepts and rejected the mechanical picture scanning method. He devised his own electronic scanning video camera by the age of 16. Within eight years he would have a picture suitable for display in the home. †

All of this was a ridiculous futuristic breakthrough into the world of a brand new communication medium. The new form of moving picture transmission would revolutionize how things were done everywhere around the world! Television made it possible for millions of people to share a single experience and become connected. Britain started regular broadcasting in 1937 and The United States rolled out full-scaled television directly after World War II. By 1970, all nations in the Western Hemisphere, all of Europe, half of Africa, and most of Asia were tuned in. Television became the eyes and ears of America's people. What a great story!

But guess what? Television is not great. TV is killing people! It turns countless Americans, as well as many more around the world, into motionless zombies, violent hooligans, unhinged sexual deviants, ailment-plagued piles of lifeless obesity, and killers. The further we progress in life glued to this cathode-ray tit, the less we know how to use our brains to come up with more constructive activities. If Nipkow, Braun, Swinton, Zworykin, Farnsworth, and all the other television pioneers knew they were creating the life-sapping travesty responsible for causing more lethargy in the United States than

marijuana, would they have continued? Clearly, something must be done to counteract the deleterious effects of such a monstrosity.

Televisions are ubiquitous. TV fever is at an alarming level. Most Americans don't even realize how many sets there are among the masses. Can you think of anyone who doesn't have one? My son lives in the house of his grandmother, a household well below the poverty line, yet they still have two televisions. Nielsen Media Research states that the U.S. now has more sets than actual people to watch them. Greater than half of all homes have more than three TVs. Also, we are starting kids on their addiction early. Nearly 1/5 of toddlers under three have a television in their room. We are feeding these still developing minds massive amounts of flashy high-speed visual stimuli while neuro-pathways are still forming and learning how to deal with the world around them. And we wonder why children have short attention spans, lack of concentration, and attention deficit disorder?

While watching television, our perceptions of time are greatly skewed. Have you ever sat down to watch something on the tube and before you knew it, your bedtime had long passed? When we are wrapped up in the events of whatever program is set before us, most other happenings in the real world take a second seat. We will be talking about what negative affects TV watching has on a person, but first we must demonstrate the reality that we don't just periodically submit ourselves. The average American turns the attention of their primary information gatherer, the eyes, toward this infernal device for a much larger chunk of their life than most would think.

Let's start with the kids. According to the study from the Kaiser Family Foundation of Menlo Park, CA, "Kids & Media @ the New Millennium," children

between ages 2 and 18 watch television an average of 2 hours 46 minutes a day. A more specific study done by Kaiser focused on the 8 to 18 age group. It showed that this bracket had a more consuming habit. When the study began in 1999, this group watched 3 hours 46 minutes a day. Apparently, tube hunger only increases each year, as they were up to 3:51 by 2004 and a whopping 4:29 by 2009. A study from the University of California, San Diego estimates we ingest 100,500 words a day, which is 350% more than just a decade ago. They also state that, contrary to popular belief, the older one gets, the more TV he or she watches. UCSD says Americans age 60 to 65 actually watch an alarming seven hours a day! I was thinking to myself, "Maybe this is because these people have done everything in life and now they are just bored." Then another thought of the more sinister variety occurred, "Is it possible the more we watch throughout the years, the more we feel the need to watch, like some narcotic?" Pretty soon, our life wholly consists of watching TV and waiting to die. This may explain how networks can get any sort of audience for soap operas.

This  
really  
is  
horrifying!

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When was the last time you heard something about McDonald's destroying America's health and increasing the world's obesity rate? I've heard of countries having almost no overweight people until McDonald's arrived. But what came first, the Big Mac brandishing franchise fruition, or television marketing campaigns aimed at the people, telling them to eat, eat, eat? Kids are a main target, seeing an average of 21 food ads a day, according to BBC News. That is more than 7,600 food enticements a year! In 1995, a National Health Nutrition Examination survey found that the percentage of overweight children was twice that of the 1960's. Another study in this group found an average of 200 junk food ads in a four hour window of Saturday morning cartoons. Couple this with

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the fact that most any activity burns more calories than watching TV, and you can easily discern we have concocted a recipe for attention-span lacking diabetic couch weights. †

I remember as a young child, watching <sup>^</sup>Old Yeller. It was a good movie, a decent story wrapped in emotion with a sad sentimental ending. For some, it may have been the first overture in understanding what death is. Parents would sit down with their kids and try to explain where the mangy yellow mutt went and why the boy was sad. We would walk away with a better understanding of how the world works. Times have certainly changed. The American Psychiatric Association relays that by age 18, a U.S. youth will have seen 16,000 murders and 200,000 acts of violence portrayed in their window to the world, the television. “Not every child who watches a lot of violence or plays a lot of violent games will grow up to be violent.” Says L. Rowell Huseman of the University of Michigan, “But just as every cigarette increases the chance that someday you will get lung cancer, every exposure to violence increases the chances that some day a child will behave more violently than they otherwise would.” A Stanford Report Study by Krista Conger has found that reducing the amount of time grade-school children spend watching television can make them less aggressive toward their peers. Have you ever known someone you thought to be naïve? Chances are the naiveté was a product of what we like to call a “sheltered life.” Or, maybe these people’s parents cared enough to disallow constant negative influence from a certain infernal device. Yes, this is the way we now label people who are not early in life indoctrinated in the ways of violence and lust, becoming ever more prevalent in society. The new portrait of twisted normality is that of sofa-ridden overweight Ritalin poppers. And if they do decide to cast away from the couch, it may be with the intent to harm someone! †

Scam!  
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Finally, I want to direct our attention to modern society's blasé point of view on the risks of sexual tomfoolery. 46% of high school students in the United States are sexually active. Most teens wish they had waited longer and one in four now have an STD. Television seems to paint a very misleading picture to the public about how sex is just another item on the American entertainment menu. According to a RAND study published in *Pediatrics* magazine, sexual content appears in around 64% of all TV programs. The programming with sexually related material run around 4.4 scenes per hour. One in seven of these programs actually portray sexual intercourse. Of all sexual content, only 15% include the risks of sex, STDs, becoming pregnant, abstinence, or a need for sexual safety. With Huston and Wright of the University of Kansas relaying, "Children spend more time watching television than any other activity except sleep," it is no wonder their hormones kick-in ever earlier. The RAND study states youth in the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile of viewing sexually explicit TV programming have a predicted probability of sexual intercourse initiation double that of those who are only watching in the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile. In other words, kids who witness more sex on TV are more likely to jump in on the act. Indeed, the telly-sitter is raising a generation of Aderol addled, self-imploding, aggressively violent, sexual deviants.

The other day, I was watching Frank Capra's "It's a Wonderful Life." In one of the DVD special features, "The Making of a Wonderful Life," it relayed that *the powers that be*, after reviewing the movie screenplay, returned a directive. Mr. Capra was to remove such terrible language as "dang," "lousy," "impotent," "jerk," and "nuts to you." Apparently in 1946, Hollywood still understood their heavy responsibility to the public. There was a conscientious duty to uphold the positive moral fiber of America, an

obligation to protect the easily influenced awareness of our culture. Over the years, it would appear this accountability has been chipped down, swayed, and flagrantly bribed into an entirely different direction. Conservative stance against the uncouth has bowed down to ratings and money. The fiber has been eaten for breakfast and relativity has been leveraged in a game lawyers would play. Protect your family; kill your TV before it kills you.