

Must TV's typical man "sitting in his undershirt and holding a can of beer" dictate the fare for the nation?

The man chiefly responsible for *Camera Three's* extraordinary presentations is Merrill Brockway, who has been the show's producer-director for the past four years and is now its executive director. Brockway, forty-eight years old, is a striking figure. He is an impish five feet six inches tall and weighs 150 pounds. His long, gray hair, grained with black, almost touches his shoulders, and his apparel is frequently eye-walloping—skintight stocking shirts (often orange in color), bright, plaid trousers, and capes, capes! "That's so they know who's producer," he explains, with a hint of steel in his voice.

Brockway's talent lies mainly in his ability to use television technology as an intensifier of esthetic experience. His primary principle—"Get good people, and let them be good"—belies the complexity behind the way he transmutes such visual tricks as dissolves, pans, zooms, fade-outs, fade-ins, and double—even triple—images into a directorial intelligence that helps the viewer both to see and to understand. Often Brockway manages to include within his programs visual explanations of artistic technique, which less imaginative directors might be content to explore by means of the standard, and often dull, interview. As an example, in a recent *Camera Three* presentation of the National Dance Troupe of Morocco, Brockway persuaded one of the female performers to unveil her face—a breach of Muslim religious law—in order to show the audience how she and her colleagues

produced the eerie, ululating wail that provided a background for much of the dancing. (The woman was delighted with her own performance; during a playback of the tape, she laughed at herself and remarked, "I look like I'm licking postage stamps.")

Brockway's innovative direction, along with his facility for searching out what is culturally new or important, has earned him two Emmys—as producer of "This Is Edward Steichen" and "Beyond the Blues."

Although the TV industry has twice officially applauded *Camera Three's* excellence, the show's time slot (at 11:30 Sunday mornings in New York and similarly sequestered in most other affiliate programing) and sophisticated subject matter have kept it from achieving anything like a mass following. Officially, two million people watch the program each week, and even this relatively low figure may be somewhat inflated.

*Camera Three's* mail daily reminds Brockway that his new ideas for television, like most artistic innovations, have offended some people. "Briefly, 'NUTS' to the ugliness of *Camera Three*," wrote one succinct lady from Tucson, Arizona. More and more frequently, however, the letters are gratifying positive. "Your programs delve into philosophies so often either overlooked or ignored or, perhaps worse, not even thought about," wrote one viewer from Evansville, Indiana; another, from Longview, Washington, wrote simply, "This Sunday's broadcast was the most beautiful thing I ever saw on television." Brockway's response to the brickbats is a patiently moderate form letter, which reads, in part, "It is difficult to explain the experimental, and

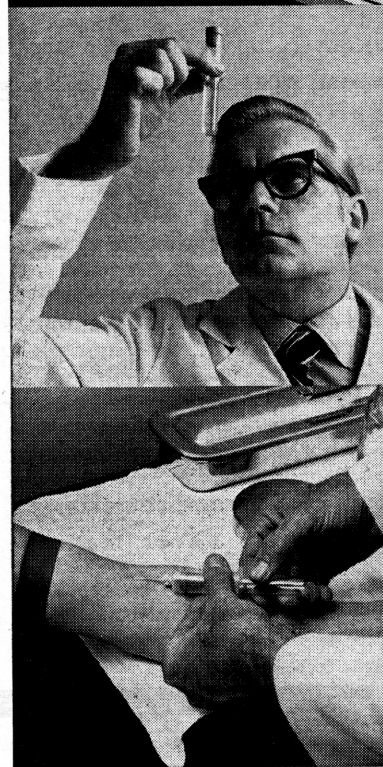
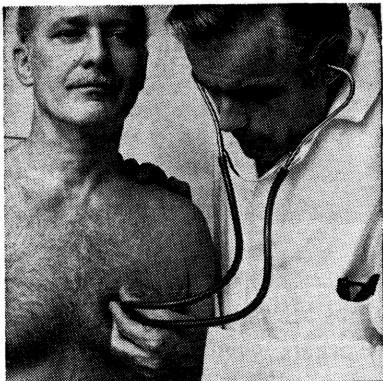
more difficult still to continue to challenge the boundaries of television—itsself an ever-changing art form—as *Camera Three* seeks to do."

Though he does try to accommodate his viewers to some extent, Brockway has steadfastly refused to compromise his artistic standards by trying to make sense to TV's archetypal man sitting in his undershirt and holding a can of beer. "I really do shows for myself," he stated flatly in a recent interview. "If you do them for someone else, you fall into that trap that sits somewhere between evangelism and patronization. I figure that if I do a show wide enough, other people will relate to it. After all, I'm a human being, and so are they." □

## Baseball Fans, You Should've Been There

BY JEFF GREENFIELD

SHEA STADIUM, N.Y.—Few things are as poignant as being in the presence of a dying way of life. The lobby of a once-glittering downtown hotel, its opulence mocked by worn carpets and indolent bellhops with no customers to please; a railroad concourse in a great American city, built to the scale of purposeful crowds, now accommodating only drifters and bewildered old men and young women with too many children, their belongings wrapped in cardboard boxes; a passenger terminal along Manhattan's waterfront. Enter these settings



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and you feel the distance between another generation's existence and our own.

On a recent Friday this year I sat in New York's Shea Stadium, watching a way of life that may well be denied to my children: weekday baseball.

Baseball used to be called the "national pastime." Think about that word: "pastime." It suggests an ambience of leisure, warmth, ease; the sense of a pastoral summer day. That is the climate that gave birth to baseball—the climate that defines its pace, now regarded as intolerably boring by more and more sports fans.

Alone of our major sports, baseball requires the warm outdoors. Basketball and hockey are indoor sports, fit for Kansas Februaries or Canadian Decembers. Football took root in our universities, with their September-to-May schedules. And the protective gear worn by football players makes the autumn weather tolerable.

But baseball is a game of summer and sunshine: vast expanses of green grass, a pace that permits relief from the heat, and a game in which the overwhelming majority of players have nothing much to do at any given moment of play. For spectators a baseball game is a chance to sit in the sunshine and study the complexities of an enormously involved game.

I had gone to Shea Stadium to watch the New York Mets face the Chicago Cubs. No, not exactly. I had gone to watch Tom Seaver—one of the best pitchers in baseball—face a twenty-two-year-old rookie named Bert Hooton, who had pitched a no-hit game his last time out. Pitchers' battles are, in one sense, thoroughly undramatic. If both men are in form, there are few hits, few times when there are two men on base heightening the expectation of a score, few chances to watch hitters slam long hits or home runs.

Instead, there are battles of will and intelligence like the one that took place during the second inning of the game. Cub catcher Randy Hundley was up. After giving up a ball, Tom Seaver threw an inside fastball that drove Hundley away from the plate as it caught the corner for a strike. Hundley, observing the fact that a hard object had passed inches from his body at 100 miles an hour, dug in a few inches farther away from the plate. Seaver's next pitch was a slow, outside curve that passed just over the plate. Had Hundley been closer, he might have punched the pitch into right field for a base hit. Instead, frozen by the inside fastball, he watched the second strike cross the plate.

Hundley stepped out of the batter's box; Seaver paced around the mound, rubbing the ball. Both men were calculat-

ing. Hundley knew that most pitchers with a one-ball, two-strike count "waste" a pitch, hoping the batter will swing at a bad ball. Instead, Seaver fired a fastball right over the plate. By the time Hundley swung, the ball was in the catcher's glove, and Seaver had a strike-out.

In the words of a mediocre raconteur, you had to be there. Three minutes of this by-play would have been interminable on television, which would have recorded only the deadly stock shot of pitcher, batter, catcher, and umpire, huddled together like frozen Lilliputians. The same three minutes would have brought a viewer three football plays, a kick, and a runback; half a dozen baskets; eight or nine furious rushes up and down the ice. A TV screen is simply too small to pick up the way a pitcher moves the ball into or away from a batter. When you're there, it is a tense, sometimes gripping encounter.

Yet for this game on a warm spring afternoon only 11,000 paying customers were there to watch, barely a fifth of the stadium's capacity. (A few thousand public school kids, admitted free by the Mets as a good-will gesture, swelled the crowd, if not the till.) And that is why day baseball is dying. The customers do not come. The television operators, who have done so much to turn a generation of youngsters away from baseball, want the games at night, when their audience is home instead of at work.

So this entire season only eight weekday ball games will be played at Shea Stadium. This year the All-Star game will be held at night, as will every weekday World Series game. (Until 1971 World Series games were all played in the daytime.)

And there will be fewer and fewer times when a baseball fan can call in sick or take a day off, then catch a bus or subway up to a stadium bathed in sunlight, sit back with a bad hot dog and a bottle of soda, and watch the game of baseball. More and more, the game will be played under harsh arc lights, illuminating but distorting, touching the green outfield grass with a surreal streak of yellow.

The old players and the writers will tell you that night baseball has hurt the game; it's thrown off the vision of the hitters, so critical to the exercise of hitting a baseball where the fielders ain't. It is no accident, they say, that major league baseball hasn't had a .400 hitter since 1941 and that .300 hitters are becoming increasingly rare.

Maybe so. But I am not a player. I am a watcher, one who likes to get to a game an hour before it starts, to watch the rituals of batting and fielding practice, to watch the movement of outfielders and baserunners under a warming sun. I am going to miss it. □