

# PUTTING THE TIMES TO BED

By JOHN TEBBEL

A VISITOR who enters the modest doors of the *New York Times* on West 43rd Street, hard by the side entrances of the doomed Paramount Theater, finds himself in a newspaper plant easily excelled in splendor by a half-dozen others in the United States and several abroad. What happens inside that plant every night, however, is quite another matter. A minor miracle occurs there which is unique in the business. It makes the *Times* what it is: a worldwide, indispensable institution.

From a small and undistinguished lobby the visitor ascends to the third floor, his nostrils quivering with the institutional smell of newspapers everywhere, compounded of ink and paper and metal. A dim, plain reception room off the hall leads to the heart of the paper, the city room. Those who enter

are confronted by a blank half-partition that compels them to turn left or right. Reporters turn left, the news executives right, pushing through a waist-high swinging door bearing a chaste brass nameplate bearing the legend "Managing Editor."

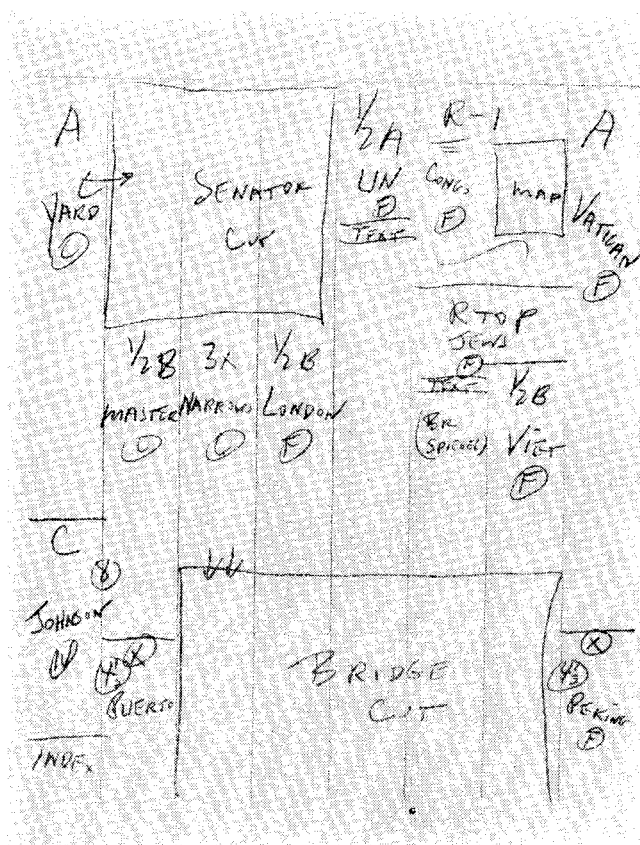
Well, yes, in a manner of speaking. Clifton Daniel, the managing editor, is nowhere to be seen, of course; he is tucked away in an office off the city room, adjacent to the space temporarily occupied by Turner Catledge, the executive editor, who is waiting for a new office to be built for him. What immediately confronts the wondering eye, once beyond the swinging door, is the vast plateau of the city room itself. In one respect it is like most other city rooms—that is, not fit for human habitation. Design has not yet triumphed in newspaper offices, and the *Times* city room is calculated to give its irascible

architecture critic, Ada Louise Huxtable, the screaming fits. It is a far-reaching, low-ceilinged, many-pillared working place, with serried acres of reporters who are, some of them, so far from the city editor's desk that they have to be summoned by aid of a public address system. The *Times* has at least twice as much of everything as any other paper.

The guts of the news operation, where the miracle is performed, is the south-east corner of the news room, the office of Theodore Bernstein, assistant managing editor, with a row of desks stretching out from it along the east wall, all the way to the news conference room. These are the desks of the other assistant managing editors, each one with an accompanying secretarial desk.

Directly outside Bernstein's door is a cluster of three desks, the nerve center of the giant machine that is the *Times*. Here sit news editor Lewis Jordan; his

Front-page dummy of November 21 was fulfilled in final edition except for bottom left-hand column where Johnson story was replaced by Roy Howard obituary. Stories marked "C" were handled by the city desk, "F" by the foreign desk.



assistant, Lawrence Hauck; and two alternating swing men, Henry R. Lieberman and Robert Phelps.

On a recent Friday afternoon at 3 o'clock, the nightly performance was just getting under way, with the Messrs. Bernstein, Jordan, and Hauck cast in the principal roles, working together like the leads in a Broadway play that has run for years. Onto Jordan's desk was spilling the day's grist from the mighty *Times* organization—from its far-flung bureaus all over the world, its American regional correspondents, its Washington bureau (largest in the capital), its city staff, its critics and special writers, funneling through the metropolitan, national, foreign, and obituary desks (the latter, oddly, also handles culture) in a cascade of all the news, as Adolf Ochs remarked more than sixty-five years ago, that's fit to print.

The news was coming in the form of summaries written by the various desk men, and already the shape of matters that night was taking form. At home there were to be two major stories, both covered with that comprehensive thoroughness which is the distinctive mark of the *Times*. One was the projected closing of the Brooklyn Navy Yard and similar area military installations. The other was the opening next day of the great Verrazano Bridge, connecting Staten Island and Brooklyn.

Emmanuel Freedman, an assistant managing editor in charge of the foreign news, in which he has been a specialist for many years, stopped by Jordan's desk with his own budget. It was dominated by the final reports of the historic Ecumenical Council in Rome, which were not only to be covered in detail by the paper's Vatican man, but whose

texts were to be printed in full during the next two days—another unique function of the *Times*.

While the news summaries were coming in, Jordan was making rapid calculations on a sheet of copy paper, estimating the number of columns needed for the news and how, in a preliminary way, he planned to distribute it. Already he could tell that it would be a larger than ordinary Saturday paper, usually the lightest edition of the week. Besides the bridge opening, the Navy Yard, and the Vatican, there would be Secretary-General U Thant's annual report. On an ordinary weekday the *Times* carries 195 columns of news, not counting texts of public papers. This figure drops below 185 on the usual Saturday, but for the edition of Saturday, November 21, Jordan estimated he would need 205 columns, including the texts, which would mean a sixty-page newspaper, with 480 columns in all. In their own budgets, the various desks had requested space totaling 225 columns, meaning that twenty columns would have to be cut.

Jordan held a brief conference with the advertising department's man, to adjust the figures for news and advertising in a sixty-page paper. Sometimes these figures are in conflict and advertising asks more space than the editorial budget allows. In such cases, editorial tries to accommodate advertising as far as it can, but the *Times* is one of the few newspapers extant which, in case of necessity, will order advertising held over or even killed in order to make space for news.

While the news editor was determining space allotments for the night, Hauck, his assistant, was busy reading

duplicate copies of all the news coming into the desks, shuttled to him by relays of copy boys. Hauck went through these "dupes" with amazing speed and accuracy, derived from a career on the *Times* that has included being news editor of both its United Nations and Washington bureaus, and coordinator of its late, lamented Western edition and the still battling Paris edition. Reading the duplicates is a backstop for the desks, so that nothing will be missed. Such constant communication between the desks and the "bullpen," as the southeast corner is called, is one of the prime factors in the paper's operation.

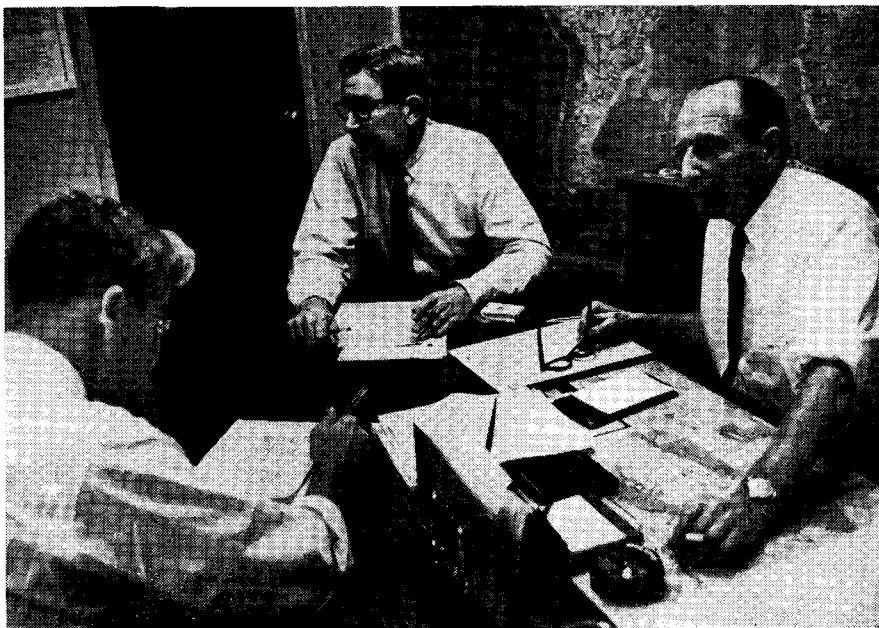
Shortly before 4 o'clock the circulation department drops a detailed report on Jordan's desk giving him all the statistics on the previous edition, including the fact that it was raining during the press run; weather, too, is a factor in circulation. The report lists the lead headline that night, and the one on the same day the previous year. It gives the day's distribution figure, compared with last year's, and the difference, along with other production totals. This report disclosed that on Friday, November 20, the *Times* sold 766,967 papers, up 79,284 over the previous year.

Until 4 o'clock, procedure on the *Times* is not much different from that of other morning newspapers, except for the sheer magnitude of the total operation and the unusual degree of communication among its various parts. At 4, however, there begins the series of events that are not so much unique in themselves as in the way the *Times* does them.

Most large newspapers, for example, have some kind of editorial conference, but more often than not it is an informal conversation between three or four news executives. At the *Times* it is a full-scale, rather formal conference in a room designed for the purpose, with a photomural of the Brooklyn Bridge and environs covering one wall, a map of the world spreading over another, and its far reaches currently doubling as Clifton Daniel's office.

Into this room at 4 o'clock every day come the men who are responsible for making the *Times* run. At one end of the long, rectangular conference table sits the managing editor, who is in charge. Since Daniel was in Phoenix attending the Associated Press Managing Editors' convention, his place at this conference was taken by Harrison Salisbury, the veteran Moscow correspondent, who was recently made an assistant managing editor. Bernstein, Jordan, and Hauck sat near him, and the conferees that night also included Steve Tyno, assistant sports editor; Claude Sitton, director of national news; A. M. Rosenthal, the metropolitan (or city) editor;

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Nerve Center—Lawrence Hauck, Lewis Jordan, and Theodore Bernstein



# MOVIES THAT CARRY THE FREIGHT

By HOLLIS ALPERT

TIME WAS when the films produced by the Motion Picture Service of the United States Information Agency caused not the slightest interest either here or in the countries in which they were exhibited as educational material about the United States. I remember seeing some samples several years ago. One showed a piece of farm machinery moving against a field of wheat and a sky of blue, while a narrator's voice intoned some facts and figures about wheat production. Others were about as dull, most of them resembling the average public relations film. Things changed in the USIA film program when Edward R. Murrow was brought in to head the agency by the Kennedy Administration. Much of the change has been wrought by George Stevens, Jr., son of the famous director, and a young man who knows the difference between good film and bad. The government films took on a more genuinely documentary character, as Stevens, head of the Motion Picture Service, put several talented film-makers to work, and the improvement in quality was matched by zooming audience figures all over the world. In 1964 it is expected that three quarters of a billion people in more than 100 countries will have seen films produced by the U.S. Government.

The United States is not among those above-mentioned countries, for the simple reason that there is a bar against the domestic release of the pictures. The enabling act under which the USIA operates doesn't specifically say that the American people shall not see the films, but the intent is there and no one at the USIA is about to endanger its already skimpy allocation of funds by incurring Congressional displeasure. Thus the films remain unshown here, with one exception: the thirty-minute color film *Jacqueline Kennedy's Asian Journey*. But it took a Senate resolution before United Artists was permitted to distribute this film to theaters on a nonprofit basis, and there was some doubt about whether that resolution was sufficient. Some felt the House should have passed a resolution, too.

Now the ban on domestic viewing of USIA films has become a matter of public scrutiny, the matter brought to a head by a realization that the first feature-length film produced by the agency

that Carl Rowan heads cannot be seen by millions of Americans who would dearly love to see it. The film is called *John F. Kennedy: Years of Lightning, Day of Drums*; it was produced by George Stevens, Jr., and was written and directed by Bruce Hershensohn, the same team that created a memorable USIA documentary last year titled *Five Cities of June*. This won an Academy Award, and again was not viewed by the American public. Of all the film and television coverage given to President Kennedy after the assassination, the film produced by USIA in color, with narration of appropriate dignity by Gregory Peck, is by far the best.

Its premiere was held in Washington and four foreign capitals on November 16, the American invitational showing taking place in the auditorium of the State Department. The audience included Chief Justice Warren, Secretary of State Rusk, various ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps in Washington, government officials, and a few members of the press. The effect on this attentive audience was profound. No one stirred for several minutes after the showing was over; then the applause that came was sparse, mainly because a lot of people were still wiping their eyes. Through a skilful use of sound and image more than a portrait of Kennedy emerged; the meaning of his abbreviated term of office came through, told in terms of a six-fronted program of intent

and action. The film juxtaposed its glimpses of a vital, personable leader with solemn scenes of the day of his state funeral. The personal comment was intermixed with coverage of large, world-affecting events. One saw the boyish grin of the President as he was being heralded in Costa Rica, and one also saw the glance that Jacqueline Kennedy stole at the flag-draped coffin as it was carried from the White House; and almost unbearable in its poignancy was a view of Mrs. Kennedy being handed the folded flag after the coffin was lowered into the grave that has become a shrine.

The film is, of course, a historic document that will testify to who and what Kennedy was for years to come. As of the moment, it is being used to carry forward around the world the objectives of our information program, and one cannot imagine a more effective way of doing so. The cost of the film came to slightly more than \$100,000, and if it cost the entire amount of the film service's yearly budget for the making of films it would have been more than worth it. That budget, by the way, parceled out among dozens of film projects of varying length, would suffice to make one Rock Hudson-Doris Day comedy, and yet there are members of Congress who hack away at the program and its budget as though the movies made are vaguely subversive in nature rather than the valuable educational tools abroad



Self-help—Film shows how Colombians built their own school.