

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO SUNDAY NEWSPAPERS?

By JOHN TEBBEL

IN COMMON with every other aspect of the print media, that old reliable commodity the Sunday newspaper is undergoing a change so far-reaching that its full implications are almost wholly unrealized by readers and imperfectly understood by many media men.

While superficial critics have been forecasting the demise of Sunday editions, the papers themselves have been coming on stronger than ever, paradoxically because of the seven lean years they have just gone through and the diminishing of their number. This trend toward consolidation, as monopoly is more politely known these days, is reflected graphically in current figures. Only one city, New York, has four Sunday papers; two (Chicago and Boston) have three; nineteen are blessed with two. The other 499 have only one, and this trend is certain to increase.

Aside from the controversial question of whether monopoly of itself is a bad thing for newspapers, consolidation has made them, as one veteran publisher has put it, "the chief remaining predictable method of communication with the *entire* community." Consequently, while there are a good many things wrong with Sunday newspapers, one thing that is indubitably right about them is their increasing effectiveness as an advertising medium, after a nearly disastrous skirmish with television. The Sunday paper is in a remarkably healthy condition from an advertising point of view.

This idea may be slowly permeating the collective consciousness of New York

media buyers, whose thoughts on the Sunday paper have been conditioned by their love affair with television, and by their lack of understanding that the atypical newspaper situation in Manhattan is light-years away from what is happening west of the Hudson. The current disenchantment of a few leading national advertisers with television, particularly its advancing costs, reflected in their increased budgets for Sunday-paper advertising, may well be a straw in the wind that will lead to a more equitable distribution of the advertising dollar.

No doubt it is difficult for a young advertising executive whose business life is centered in New York to see the Sunday paper in historical perspective, and to grasp what life is like "out there." It is not easy to shake off the image of the Sunday edition that Pulitzer and Hearst stamped so indelibly on the public mind. The sensationalism of the late *American Weekly*, the Hearst Sunday magazine, through most of its career still lingers fragrantly, and the memory of the old "brown section," the Sunday rotogravure with its stiff society pictures and warmed-over news photos, is not easy to eradicate even in the presence of the new kind of Sunday magazine that has emerged in the past few years. Nor does the junk-pile editorial character of a good many contemporary Sunday papers contribute to a true impression of what this medium has become.

Most difficult of all to realize, perhaps, unless one has seen it or lives with it, is the local prestige of the Sunday magazine editor on the paper that produces its own. He is often a celebrity in his

town. As in the nineteenth-century days of personal journalism, he is able to place his own imprint strongly on his product. His magazine can be a platform for crusading, a political weapon, a promoter of local business and institutions, a reflection of a town's past and present—all this and a prime advertising medium, both local and national.

The most obvious fact about Sunday newspapers today is their heavy advertising. That resounding thump on the doormat as the huge bundles are deposited beside the milk bottles is the sound of money. These editions represent an unparalleled shopping service and an unexampled penetration of market—because there is one thing about the Sunday paper situation that has not changed: It still arrives at a time when the competition from other media is virtually nonexistent, and every week it reinforces a family reading habit that is generations old.

MUCH less obvious is the change in Sunday editions represented by the magazine. This supplement is exactly what that word implies. It is not in competition with the other parts of the paper, but constitutes an island of information, entertainment, and color in the vast sea of newsprint. What is happening to these rotogravure magazines is the most significant aspect of the changing Sunday newspaper.

The field is shared by the three remaining nationally syndicated magazines, *This Week*, *Parade*, and *Family Weekly*; and Metropolitan Sunday Newspapers, Inc., a cooperative sales organization owned by about fifty news-

papers, which sells national advertising in Sunday magazines or comic sections on a network or spot basis, and provides through its Editorial Feature Service a package of national and international text-photo stories that members may use at their own discretion in conjunction with locally developed stories. Metro's sales effort is like that of most other print media except that it does not actually produce a magazine.

All the syndicated magazines are printed by high-speed gravure process, with a standard 850-line advertising page. The others, whether independent or serviced by Metro, are printed by gravure, letterpress, or offset, with gravure predominating, sometimes in a 1,100-line-size tabloid as well as the standard 850.

Among the syndicated products, the recently departed *American Weekly* was the forerunner of all the others. A product of young Willie Hearst's active brain in the last decade of the nineteenth century when he was locked in nearly mortal combat with Joseph Pulitzer and his *World*, this first attempt at a Sunday magazine was highly successful in its sex-and-sensation days but ultimately died of respectability, complicated by competition.

With the founding of *This Week* magazine in 1935, the magazine idea in Sunday paper publishing came of age. It introduced high-speed gravure printing in full color to the field, and it was the first syndicated magazine to be produced for a group of independent papers. In time (1942) it became the first to adopt the 850-line page.

The outstanding success of *This Week* naturally resulted in competition. *Parade*, a product of the Marshall Field organization, appeared in 1941, beginning as a picture magazine and later becoming more standardized with picture-and-text combinations. *Parade* was originally meant to circulate primarily in secondary markets, but increasingly since John Hay Whitney acquired it in 1958 for his Whitney Communications Corporation, it has also served major metropolitan areas.

A fourth entry in the Sunday magazine field came in 1954 with the founding of *Family Weekly* by William H. Marriott, who subsequently sold it to Leonard Davidow, proprietor of a monthly newspaper magazine, *Suburbia Today*. Designed to reach the middle-sized and small cities, *Family Weekly*, using essentially the same editorial pattern as the others, soon had a distribution of 160 papers, leading the field in numbers.

It is no secret that these syndicated magazines and the independents as well have been in varying degrees of trouble since 1958, mostly as a result of television's intense competition for national

advertising. But the observers who were writing obituaries for the Sunday magazine a few years ago are now having second thoughts. The big advertisers are beginning to return, the surveys show a high degree of popularity—Sunday magazines rank second only to the news section—and advertising effectiveness is being proved in places where it counts most—coupon ads and box-top returns.

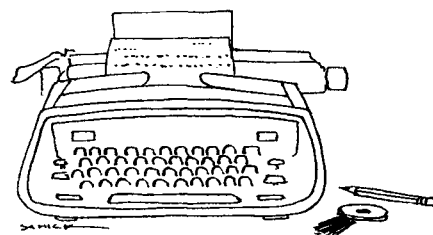
The syndicated magazines are not out of the woods yet, but they have good reason to hope for better days ahead. They can, for example, reach down into the broad category of papers that cannot afford to produce their own Sunday magazine, and thus acquire a whole new market. Last year the three syndicated weeklies began a joint promotion campaign that promises to pay off, and they countered the research studies of regular magazines purporting to show an impressive pass-along readership with studies of their own, demonstrating a greater in-home readership and superior retention value. Continued coordinated selling and research, and the organization of manufacturing and marketing facilities to give the advertiser more flexibility in reaching more specialized audiences—these are the bright and best hopes of the Big Three.

Paradoxically, the syndicated magazines have shown the way, in a sense, to their rivals, the locally produced magazines. For years the professionally edited syndicate products made the home-grown variety look like the somewhat shabby, amateurish efforts they were. The editing of the independents was usually entrusted to an old employee marking time before retirement, or to a Sunday staff man with no magazine experience. Today magazine-trained men are at the helm of the better weeklies, and the editor's job is now one of the best on the paper. The resulting improvement in quality has made some Sunday magazines outstanding.

Far in the lead is the New York *Herald Tribune's New York Magazine*, whose editor, Clay Felker, is turning out a brilliant, sophisticated product that has broken entirely new ground. Edited for a New York audience, it has nevertheless influenced Sunday publications elsewhere, as the *Herald Tribune's* Sunday edition itself has pointed the way toward a new kind of Sunday newspaper. Both magazine and paper may be too far ahead of their time, however. Felker's imaginative creation is an intellectual success, but it has been far from a hit at the advertising box-office—although the *Herald Tribune's* management has recently been more optimistic that it will survive hard financial times and emerge as a real competitor for the fat little gold mine that is the *New York Times Magazine*.

But the preoccupation of Madison Avenue space buyers with television and with the New York scene has perhaps blinded them to the new status of the locally produced Sunday magazine out in the provinces. The *Detroit Free Press*, to cite only one example among several, is producing in its *Detroit Magazine* a well-edited and handsomely designed section that ranks with the best. In Chicago, the *Tribune's* Sunday magazine often runs a substantial 112 pages or more, and exhibits not only the splendid color work for which the paper has always been well known, but heavy advertising balanced by sharply edited editorial content.

Both these magazines are among the forty-two papers serviced by Metropolitan Sunday Newspapers, all of which bear the characteristic boxed "Sunday" logotype of the organization. Business at Metro is good these days; even the once faltering comic section increased 100 per cent over last year. Metro executives say that flexibility in marketing has been the keynote of the upsurge, after several years of discouraging figures. In the



competition with regular national magazines for advertising, Metro offers a regional and local penetration which matches, and sometimes more than matches, the rapidly developing trend among conventional periodicals toward split runs aimed both at regions and at particular metropolitan areas. The individual runs of the independents are capable of greater flexibility than the printing facilities most national magazines can provide. The new mode of space buying which computerization introduced has been the primary factor in shaping the present market.

All in all, Sunday newspapers, and especially Sunday magazines, have emerged in the past few years as a unique medium. The magazine is well ahead of the other sections of the paper in adapting itself to changing times, and promises to become a particularly valuable outlet for the national advertiser who wants to get right down to the local outlet, and for the local advertiser who wants to see his product separated from the gray rivers of type running through the other sections. Editorially, the application of concepts and techniques once peculiar to national periodicals in time may make the local Sunday magazine a product that will rival its big brothers in popularity.

"Because You Have Always Told Half-Truths..."

By NICHOLAS SAMSTAG

*Sing a song of probity:
A pocketful of wry.
Four and twenty blackguards
Baked in a pie.
When the pie was opened,
The finks began to sing.
Wasn't that a dainty dish . . . ?*

A RECENT ISSUE of the *New York Times* carried the following interesting testimony on the advertising world:

A former executive of an advertising agency testified reluctantly in court yesterday that a highly successful promotion campaign for a reducing pill had been dishonest.

The witness, Richard King, television producer for the Regimen tablet account at Kastor, Hilton, Chesley, Clifford & Atherton, admitted in Brooklyn Federal Court that he knew models used in commercials were on severe diets. Yet the scripts he provided for them attributed the weight loss to the pills alone "without dieting."

It has been said that "an advertising man is born in a fog and dies on the first clear day." There is a lot of truth in that aphorism, but if it's so foggy on Madison Avenue, how did it get that way? I have a theory.

Back in the days when most advertising was spoken and most people didn't

know how to read, the public crier announced the availability of many goods and services. He survives today in the radio-television announcer—but with an important difference. Whereas the public crier merely offered goods and services; the radio-TV announcer cozens, wheedles, persuades, charms. He *sells*.

I suppose, in the best of all possible worlds, goods and services might still be merely offered. But came the industrial revolution and, with it the Manchester mills, the steam printing press, and the world's first cheap source of newsprint for the mass distribution of words. Things have never been the same since.

Power was what industry was waiting for, and when its new machinery began to bring more and more cheap consumer goods into the market, industry gradually found that it needed advertisement producers to sell the products of the machines almost as much as it needed mechanics to keep the machines running.

In the long slide of time from the public crier to the radio-TV announcer, a new kind of man has developed—part journalist, part peddler, part lawyer: the Special Pleader.

In the movie *Lawrence of Arabia*, somebody says to the hero (a great Special Pleader if I ever heard one), "Because you have always told half-truths, you have forgotten where the truth is." Every member of the advertising establishment spends most of his working

hours concocting half-truths and then trying to distribute them as widely and persuasively as possible. This is his job. He is not paid to tell the whole truth or even to know it. Usually he isn't told it. When he comes across facts that weaken or fail to strengthen his case, he automatically ignores them, buries or eliminates them, not only from his thinking but from his consciousness as well. By working hard at this assignment (and it isn't an easy one), he gradually succeeds at it. And so he forgets where the truth is, masters his half-truths, and his income begins to climb.

Now, let it be clearly understood that I see nothing wrong about this from the point of view of advertising. Nor are these remarks intended to be a plea for integrity in advertising, if, by integrity, we mean telling the whole truth. For advertising, by definition, is a special pleader. Nobody in his right mind really believes an advertisement or a promotion piece; not really, not the way you believe your father or a good friend. Nobody with any sense expects to find the whole truth in an advertisement any more than he expects a man applying for a job to describe his shortcomings and more serious faults. Who is willing to denigrate his own product or service except a fool? There's bound to be something wrong (or imperfect) with almost anything. In short, the half-truth is the essence of advertising.

But what impact has this fact upon the advertising man? The need to deal only with the truths that further his purpose cannot help carrying over into his life outside his work. As he proceeds along the path of his career, he is likely to become less and less real, more and more lopsided. When the schoolteacher goes home, she tends to treat the members of her family as if they were children. The man who is paid to listen to complaints all day long for the Bon Ton Department Store continues to be a receiving apparatus for his friends' grievances after hours. The professional advertising man tends to examine his company, superiors, colleagues, friends, community, nation, civilization, in the same way. He seeks only the things he wants to find, only what he can use in his continuing campaign to make himself a contented, effective company and family man.

And so he tends more and more to see the boss as a Genius or a Sweet Guy or a Dedicated Corporate Servant, a Privi-



"Oh, you're a philosopher! You must know Hugh Hefner!"