

Television

'I Think I Ought to Mention

By MILLARD LAMPELL

IN 1950, I began to keep a journal with a title borrowed from Dostoevsky: "Notes From Underground." In it I recorded the ironic, sometimes bizarre, sometimes ludicrous experience of living in the twilight world of the blacklist. The last entry is dated 1964.

I am not by nature an injustice collector. I think martyrdom is for the saints and self-pity is a bore. So, at the Television Academy Award ceremonies, when I went up to accept an Emmy for my Hallmark drama, "Eagle in a Cage," it was with some surprise that I heard myself saying, "I think I ought to mention that I was blacklisted for ten years."

At the press conference afterward, a reporter asked why I had said it. I had to stop and consider, and a line of the philosopher Santayana's swam into my mind, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

The Emmy broadcast brought a flood of letters, including a number that asked in puzzlement, "What was this blacklist?"

Well, brothers and sisters, it was like this:

By 1950, I had been a professional writer for eight years, including the time spent as a sergeant in the Air Force that produced my first book, "The Long Way Home." I had published poems, songs and short stories, written a novel and adapted it as a motion picture, authored a respectable number of films, radio plays and television dramas, collected various awards, and seen my Lincoln cantata, "The Lonesome Train," premiered on a major network, issued as a record album, and produced in nine foreign countries.

Then, quietly, mysteriously and almost overnight, the job offers stopped coming.

Free-lance writing is a fiercely competitive arena, and when work bypasses you and goes to others, the logical conclusion is that they have more talent. At the same time, however, there was another disturbing note. I began to have increasing difficulty in getting telephone calls through to producers I had known for years.

It was about three months before my agent called me in, locked her door, and announced in a tragic whisper, "You're on the list."

It seemed that there was a list of writers, actors, directors, set designers, and even trapeze artists, choreographers and clowns who were suspected of Communist lean-

ings. McCarthy of Wisconsin waving a briefcase at the television cameras and rasping that it contained the names of a battalion of Reds in the State Department. A time of suspicion, anonymous accusation, and nameless anxiety. Friends I had known for years passed me by on the street with no sign of recognition but a furtive nod. Invitations ebbed away. I tried to be philosophical about it, but it was subtly unnerving, like being confronted on every side by advertisements insinuating dandruff, tooth decay and underarm odor, leaving me with a nagging sense of social failure.

Years later, my memories of those days were to serve me well when I sat down to write a play based on John Hersey's "The Wall," and had to create the atmosphere of the early days of the Warsaw Ghetto.

I sold my car, moved my wife and children to a cramped apartment in a cheap neighborhood and, when my savings ran out, lived on small loans from friends and what I could earn from a thin trickle of odd, ill-paid assignments. Using a pseudonym, I wrote a few radio broadcasts for the Government of Israel, an educational film for the Government of Puerto Rico, a few scripts for benefits given by charitable organizations.

Then, in the spring of 1952, a wispy, harassed man in an ill-fitting suit appeared at my door, flipped through a bulging folder, and handed me a subpoena from the Senate Committee on Internal Security. It was in Washington, at a closed session of the committee, that for the first time I got some clues to the nature of the charges against me.

In 1940, I had come up from West Virginia and, with Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie and Lee Hays, formed a folk-singing group called The Almanacs. Now, when every third college student seems to be toting a guitar, when used car lots advertise "Hootenanny Sale," and willowy girls drive around in Alfa-Romeos bought with the royalties from their albums of chain-gang blues and piney woods laments, it seems unbelievable that when I first came to New York The Almanacs were to my knowledge, the only folk-singing group north of the Cumberland Gap.

Leadbelly was around, newly arrived and living in obscurity. Josh White and Burl Ives were

peace or prejudice, and never thought to give a damn who the sponsoring organization was. Nobody ever tried to tell me what to say.

Years later, before the Senate Committee, I found that period haphazardly reported and presented as evidence that I had taken part in a subversive plot to bring riot and ruin to my native land. I was ordered to account for my life and to give the names of everyone I could ever remember having seen at those bygone benefits. Considering privacy of belief to be a constitutional right of all Americans, I refused.

Even though I appeared at a closed session of the committee, it didn't take very long for the news to get around. The blacklist slammed doors completely shut.

In the late summer of 1952, I gave myself a deadline of three months, resolving that if I couldn't earn a living as a writer, I would pack up my family, return to the city where I was born, and go back to work in a dye factory.

Excerpt from my journal:

This morning, nine days before the deadline, the director V. calls to offer me a job writing a documentary film about an oil boom town in North Dakota. He is aware that I am blacklisted, but is willing to take a chance. Apologizes for not being able to give me name credit. Disgusted by the blacklist, he will, as a protest, not ask me to use a pseudonym. The credits will not mention any writer.

If the predominant tenor of the era was fear, there was also moving evidence of courage and compassion:

In today's mail, a letter from the prominent actor, C. Some time ago he starred in a radio play of mine, but I really do not know him very well. He is a rock-ribbed conservative, but in the envelope I find a \$500 check and a brief note. "I have a feeling that life is going to get pretty rough in the days ahead. This is a gift, to use when you need to catch your breath and get back your perspective." I return the check with thanks and a dignity which I probably cannot afford.

Leafing through the journal, I come upon an entry that is pure Gogol farce:

The television writer L. stops me on the street with a nightmare tale. A year ago, having no political activity in his past, but fearing he might become the victim of some reckless ac-

parian. It was all hints, innuendos and enigmatic murmurs. "I understand he's in a little trouble."

What made it all so cryptic was the lack of accusations or charges. Fearing legal suits, the film companies and networks flatly denied that any blacklist existed. There was no way of getting proof that I was actually on a list, no way to learn the damning details. My income simply dropped from a comfortable five figures to \$2,000 a year.

Finally I ran into an old friend, a producer who had downed a few too many martinis, and he leveled with me. "Pal, you're dead. I submitted your name for a show and they told me I couldn't touch you with a barge pole." He shrugged unhappily. "It's a rotten thing, I hate it, but what can I do?" And with a pat on my cheek: "Don't quote me, pal, because I'll deny I said it."

Through the next several years, bit by bit, the shadowy workings of the blacklist came into sharp focus. There were, to begin with, numerous lists. Their common chief origin was the Attorney General's unofficial and highly arbitrary index of "subversive organizations," and the published reports of the sessions of the House Committee on Un-American Activities—testimony from self-styled experts on Communism, a steamy mixture of fact, fancy and hearsay. Among those who had been named as subversives before the committee were the 16th-century playwright Christopher Marlowe and Shirley Temple, characterized in 1938 as an unwitting Communist dupe. But also named at one session or another were hundreds of working professionals in the communications and entertainment fields. Then somebody got the profitable idea of publishing "Red Channels," a handy, paperback compendium of the names of the suspected. Every time a name listed in this pamphlet appeared among the credits of a film or a broadcast, it was greeted with complaints written under the letterheads of various obscure patriotic organizations. It took only a handful of these letters to stir panic in the executive corridors.

By 1951, standard equipment for every Madison Avenue and Hollywood producer's desk included, along with the onyx ash tray and pen-holder and the gold cigarette lighter, a copy of "Red Channels" in the bottom drawer.

Perhaps one has to begin by calling up the atmosphere of those days, the confusing, stalemate fighting in Korea, the flare-up of belligerent patriotism, the growing government impatience with any dissent from official policy. It was a time of security checks, loyalty oaths, FBI investigations, tapped phones, secret dossiers, spy scandals, library book-burnings, and Senator Joseph

benefits for Spanish refugees, striking Kentucky coal miners, and starving Alabama sharecroppers.

We were all children of the Depression, who had seen bone-aching poverty, bummed freights across country, shared gunny-sack blankets with the dispossessed and the disinherited. We had learned our songs from gaunt, unemployed Carolina cotton weavers and evicted Dust Bowl drifters. Such as they were, our politics were a crude, hand-me-down cross between Eugene Debs and the old Wobblies. A primitive, folk version of what Franklin D. Roosevelt was saying in his fireside chats. We were against hunger, war and silicosis, against bankers, landlords, politicians and Dixie deputy sheriffs. We were for the working stiff, the underdog, and the outcast, and those were the passions we poured into our songs. We were all raw off the road, and to New York's left-wing intellectuals we must have seemed the authentic voice of the working class. Singing at their benefits kept us in soup and guitar-string money.

Then came the army, and the week after I was discharged I appeared on Town Hall of the Air teamed with Bill Mauldin, debating two generals on the subject, "What The GI Wants." It was a natural set-up for audience sympathy, enlisted men against the brass. I got almost two thousand fan letters, and overnight found myself a kind of celebrity, in demand as a public speaker. I spoke anywhere that the subject was

cent, he be given a written certificate of clearance.

In due time, L. was found to be free of taint, and given his document, only to discover that he was no longer able to get work. It appears that in the course of probing him, the investigator questioned a number of network executives. He assured them that it was only a routine check and L. was not under suspicion. Their reaction was skeptical. "Where there's smoke, there's fire," L. haunts the waiting room of the networks, a gaunt ghost desperately brandishing his certificate. He has not worked in eight months.

In those first years, the two major sources of work were other writers suffering from a creative block and desperate producers with deadline and budget trouble. I spent four months filling the assignments of a well-known writer who found himself unable to face his typewriter. It was a lucky and profitable arrangement that ended when he appeared one midnight and haggardly told me that his analyst had advised him that signing his name to my work was giving him an even deeper psychological problem. "He says I'm losing my identity."

By taking everything that came our way, a few dozen of us on the East Coast and in Hollywood were working sporadically and managing to survive. For every blacklisted writer who anonymously kept at his trade, ten fell by the wayside. If you could turn out a feature film in a couple of weeks or an hour television play

to get calls from who would chortle your play on television you can't say any can't kid me, I'd style anywhere." So actually was my work another name. So not, my protests avail, and I wasn't to feel amused or en-

The producer T. the head of a major studio threw the f a script back at "It stinks. Do me wasting money, go a blacklisted writ

It was a scramble myself writing all. I'd never tried before training films, traveling Broadway place choose to go through in many ways it skills and expanded invention.

The actor C. I lunch and proposes the pilot script for one of the networks him and his wife plain that I am black while I would've the job, I will have pseudonym. He insists name will be on aside my warnings cause trouble, tell he considers the blackly repugnant.

I write the pilot, is delighted with it personally to the vice president in production who glances and hands it back. C. protests that he read it, only to "Look, even if it would be lousy."

Sobered but still offers me the job and sign my work with name. Only it will the name of an actor who can appear at references and rehearse some searching. I a young writer who collaborate, and whose face will represent

In the end, I was four different pseudonyms a Swedish name sensitive art-house there were two or writers willing to sign when the network demanded a name with and a list of reputations

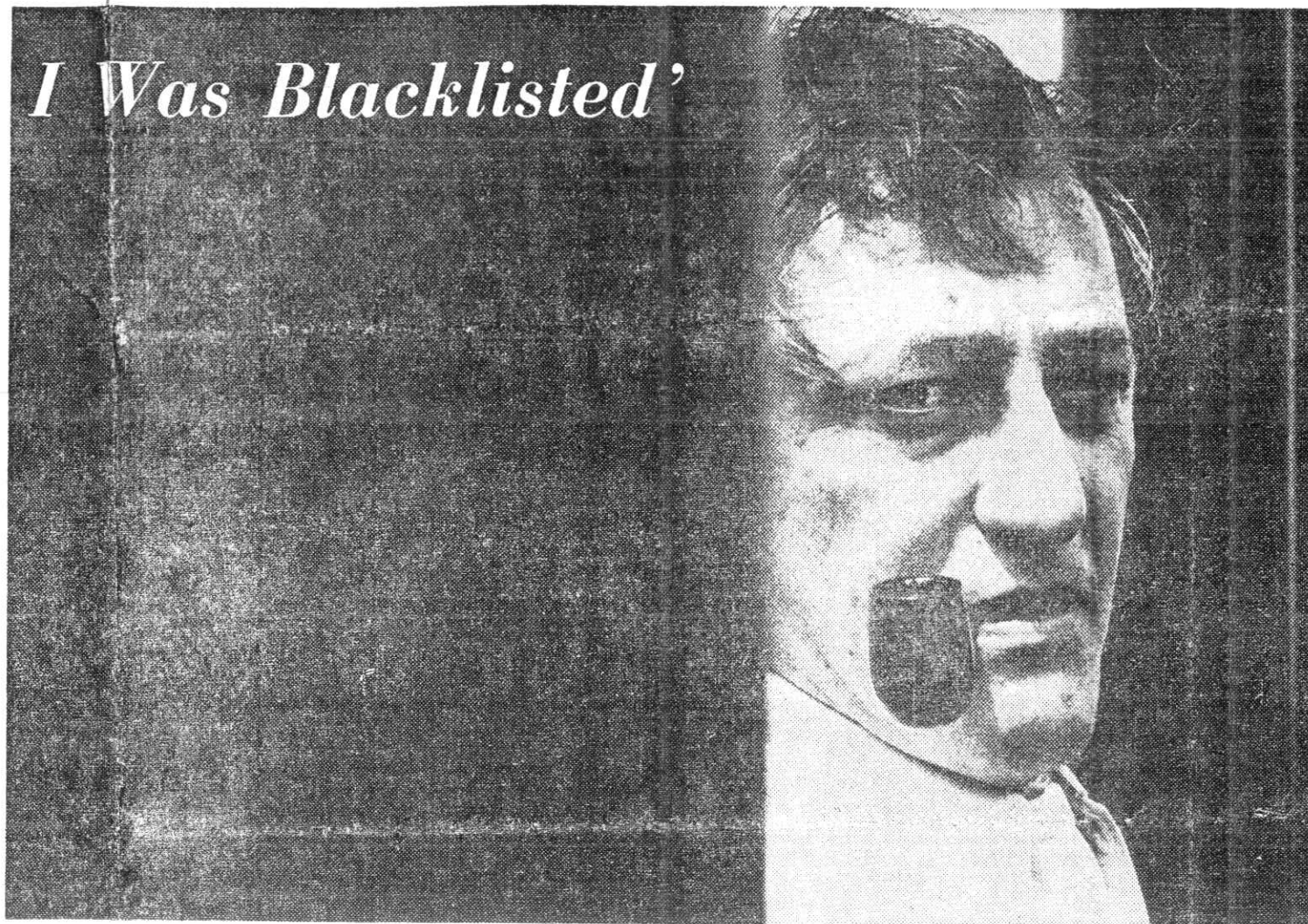
I had read Kafka, prepared me for the living in the strange nameless. A script a major award, and the queer feeling of person when another up to claim it. At that was even worse for I to give me the trophy telling me that he fraud. We ended up a trash can, and then and got drunk together

Of course, there was avoid all the difficulties



EMMY ENCORE—Simone Signoret, in a repeat of her award-winning performance, plays opposite George Maharis in "A Small Rebellion" on "Bob Hope Presents" Wednesday, 9 P.M., on N.B.C.

I Was Blacklisted'



Writer Millard Lampell: "Quietly, mysteriously and almost overnight, the job offers stopped coming"

Bob Green

in five days for a twenty-fifth of your former price, you had a chance.

It was a lot tougher for the directors and the actors. They couldn't work without being present in person. One brilliant clown who has since become the toast of Broadway and Time magazine used to go around roaring, "I'm Z., the man of a thousand faces, all of them blacklisted!"

The doorbell rings, and I find myself confronted by the well-known character actor, S. In the last decade he has appeared in more than fifty Western movies. Blacklisted now, he is peddling Christmas cards house-to-house. He displays his wares, and I regretfully explain that I can't afford to send cards this year. He settles for a cup of coffee, and reminisces about Gary Cooper and Gene Autry.

By the mid 1950's, the situation had eased a bit. A sympathetic fledgling producer, employing the talents of blacklisted writers, came up with two extremely successful network children's adventure series. And the word was getting around that such-and-such a Holly-

always appear before the committee and purge oneself. There were two lawyers who specialized in arranging this, one in New York and one in Hollywood. The established fee was \$5,000, for which one got expert advice in composing a statement of *mea culpa*, avowing that, being an artist, one was naive about the devious ways of politics and had been the dupe of diabolical forces. One was also required to offer the names of former friends and acquaintances who were the real subversives. If one knew no such names, the lawyer would obligingly supply some, in one case arguing away the qualms of a famous choreographer who was anxious to clear himself but reluctant to become an informer with the reassuring thought, "Hell, they've all been named already, so you're not really doing them any harm. They can't be killed twice."

I find a whole section of my journal devoted to those who sought to purge themselves, pathetic case histories of the anatomy of panic:

K. has known the playwright

riences with self-abasement and the need for absolution.

Walking down Broadway, someone catches my elbow from behind. It is R., whom I have known for fifteen years, and who recently appeared as a "co-operative witness" before the Committee. He asks plaintively why I passed him without saying hello, and I explain that I didn't see him. He shakes his head, "No, no, you stared right at me." He grimaces. "I don't blame you. I'm disgusting. Do you think I'm disgusting?" I am not particularly proud of the fact that I nodded yes and walked away. Who appointed me his judge? He's as much a victim as the rest of us.

In 1960, what seemed to be a wide crack appeared in the wall of the blacklist. I was offered the job of writing a film in London, working with a renowned Hollywood director who had fled a committee subpoena. It was a suspense film of, I think, considerable artistic quality, and despite the fact that our names were on it, American distribution rights were purchased by a major Hollywood company. When the first publicity

Actually, blacklisting last longest in broadcasting. By 19 my cantata "The Lonesome Trail" was beginning to be performed again in schools and colleges. 1962, I got my first name credit on a film for a Hollywood major studio, without picket lines or protest. But it was not until 1964 that David Susskind and Dan M. Nick's Talent Associates approached me to write a script for their CBS series, "East Side West Side." I said I wouldn't consider doing it without credit, and they answered unhesitatingly, "Of course." The play I wrote was called "No Hiding Place." It was about a Negro family moving into a white suburb. The first time the name had appeared on the Hollywood screen in more than a decade, the script won half a dozen awards and the network scheduled a special repeat broadcast.

George Schaefer, director of Hallmark's Hall of Fame, happened to see it, and had his assistant look up my name in the telephone book. He asked if I would accept a commission to write an original drama for

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After being blacklisted for a number of years, O. arranged to go before the Committee and clear himself. At two in the morning, K.'s doorbell rings. It is O., looking ill and exhausted. He points at K. and says in a terrible whisper, "I named you." Then he turns and shuffles back toward the elevator. From others, I gather he spent the whole night making the rounds of the friends he turned in to the Committee.

Who can ever fully understand what fear can do to a man? There were things that happened which, even now, I find myself unable to explain:

Opening night party at the house of the film and stage director, K. He draws me into a corner and tells me that, on the road in New Haven, he was visited by an investigator from the Un-American Activities Committee. "I told him to drop dead," K. goes on for twenty minutes, describing his indignation and defiance, reviling the blacklist. The next day, I learn from his friend T. that when all this took place, K. had already appeared before the Committee and named names.

During those years, I re-read the entire works of Dostoevsky, and Lord, how much better I understood them. For by then, I had had my first painful expe-

domed plans for the premiere. But they had half a million dollars at stake, and their lawyers met with Legion representatives to work out a deal to protect their investment. The film would have no official opening. A few months would be allowed to pass, to let things cool off. Then the picture would be quietly sneaked into the neighborhood theaters as part of a double bill with a Cary Grant comedy.

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And so it went. Truce came to Korea, and McCarthy, after being outmaneuvered at one of his own hearings by Department of the Army lawyer Joseph Welch, was squashed by his colleagues in the Senate, and eventually died. Dalton Trumbo won an Oscar under the name of Robert Rich, and emerged from underground to write "Exodus" in his own name for Otto Preminger. John Henry Faulk sued several of the self-appointed patriots who had put pressure on the networks, and won a whopping award for character damage. The blacklist began to crumble and producers assured me that in their hearts they had always opposed it. Along Madison Avenue and Sunset Boulevard, people wondered exactly how it had ever happened in the first place.

Once again we are involved in a confusing, bloody, stalemate conflict in a far-off place. Once again there is a flare-up of belligerent patriotism, signs of official impatience with dissent.

I remember arguing until dawn, some years ago, with Antek, one of the handful of surviving fighters from the Warsaw Ghetto. He insisted that terror was not a matter of geography, and that the fear and savagery that exploded in Warsaw might happen anywhere. And I avowed that it could never happen here. Not in a nation with the tradition of Jefferson and Lincoln.

Assuming that we remember that heritage, and our lapses from it. Assuming that Carl Sandburg was wrong the day I heard him say, grinning crookedly in that way of his, "Man has a quick forgettery."

Strange Things in Red Rocks

By VAL ADAMS

THE "Bell Telephone Hour," which believes there will be a tomorrow, filmed its Easter television program the other day in the Red Rocks amphitheater, 10 miles west of Denver, Colo. In the huge outdoor arena carved thousands of years ago by the forces of nature, the happenings were unusual, even a little mystic.

The Bell System had engaged the Mormon Tabernacle Choir to sing selections from Handel's "Messiah." From headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah, 325 choir members were sent by special train (they were to fly until the airlines were struck) to Denver and then on eight buses out to Red Rocks. Between talent and production crew (10 film cameras, including one in a helicopter), the Bell System had spent months in working out logistics. The only question was whether it might come up rain on the day of filming. In a nonsectarian way, Ma Bell reportedly sought special blessing.

On the morning of filming the sky was overcast and threatening. The Mormon Tabernacle Choir arrived at Red Rocks about 1 P.M. and, conforming to custom, uttered a prayer before it started to rehearse. During the prayer the supplicant petitioned for fair weather.

A moment later there was a clap of thunder and a downpour.

"It looked to me that we would have to do a show on Noah's Ark instead of Handel's 'Messiah,'" said a Bell representative.

The rain poured but it did not disturb the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. One male member sat in the open, umbrella overhead, writing letters. Two others, sheltered by the overhang of a huge rock, played chess. The other 322 Mormons nonchalantly nibbled on their box lunches. The hard-bitten television crew shivered in the rain and cursed the elements.

In an hour the rain ceased. "The weather" cleared beautifully and there was a great big sun up in the sky," said Bell's man.

Rehearsal went forward and in dazzling daylight the show was filmed in glorious color. Before nightfall the Mormon Tabernacle Choir got back into its eight buses and headed off in the sunset toward Denver and the return train to Salt Lake City.

WRONG AUSPICES

There was a fight on television last Monday night in which Jose Torres retained his light heavyweight crown against Eddie Cotton. At one point in the program the TV announcer said that Cotton, who is 40 years old, was in

great condition because he did not smoke or drink. The broadcast was sponsored by Consolidated Cigar and Schaefer beer.

CHANNEL 13 IMPACT

There were some interesting sidelights in the study of Channel 13 that was issued last week. The report on the impact of the educational station in the metropolitan New York area was compiled by Louis Harris and Associates, who went around asking viewers all sorts of questions.

One question asked was how viewers had spent their spare time in the last week. Twenty-five different activities were listed, including "lazed around doing nothing." Well, sir, 28 per cent of the total viewers in the sample said they had "lazed around doing nothing" and 30 per cent of Channel 13 viewers said the same thing. Are Channel 13 viewers lazier than others?

But Channel 13 viewers shoot less pool than others. Ten per cent of the total viewers "went bowling or played pool," but only 6 per cent of Channel 13 viewers engaged in such plebeian pastimes.

The Harris study also observed that Channel 13 was reaching a lot more older than younger viewers and that this was a weakness over the long haul. Maybe Channel 13 needs Soupy Sales.