



## On The Air

By BOB WILLIAMS

In what one broadcaster described as a "lesser of evils" deal, local TV stations have decided to shift their transmitters in the fall of 1971 from the Empire State Bldg. to a higher spire atop one of the towers of the proposed World Trade Center in Lower Manhattan.

The stations had previously protested that the Trade Center's towers would haunt homescreens of viewers in Upper Manhattan, The Bronx and Westchester with "ghosts," bouncing back the Empire State Bldg. signals. The Port Authority, builder of the prospective Trade Center, has agreed to pay the freight for the shift of station equipment and provide rent-free facilities until expiration of the broadcasters' leases with the Empire State Bldg., which don't run out, at the going rate of more than \$1,000,000 annually, until 1984.

Any way you look at the big, multi-million-dollar shift, the pictorial fortunes of the viewer seem dubious. It's conceded that mere construction of the upper reaches of the Trade Center will affect the reception of uncounted homescreen addicts for possibly as long as a couple of years. And even after completion of the Trade Center, there's a likelihood that antennas all over the New York area might require adjustments.

It behooves the Board of Estimate, in passing further approval on the Trade Center, to inquire into the specific details from the public standpoint. And it would seem that the local TV stations, agreeing to make the big move, would devote some air-time to the consequences for the enlightenment of their customers. Some broadcasters quietly conceded that the prospects look golden indeed for the cable-TV operators, who already have their municipal franchises for \$5-per-month picture delivery, plus installation fees.

Ralph Story, familiar as host in the late 1950s of "The \$64,000 Challenge," in TV's lower quiz-depths, took us on a rather amusing tour on Ch. 2 last night of San Simeon, the grotesque California castle of the late William Randolph Hearst. The program was a Ch. 2 import from the CBS-owned station in Los Angeles. Some of the film should be preserved for a more meaningful examination on TV some time of the influence of Hearst, the chain newspaper publisher, on his times.

The San Simeon monument of Hearst, now a California state tourist-site, stands meanwhile as one example of what you can do with \$30,000,000 to spare, between editions. Gloria Swanson enjoyed sleeping in Richelieu's bed, which Hearst imported. But Mary Astor, another Hollywood-star guest in the old days, found the place an "unbelievable drag, you know."

CBS confirms it will devote three one-hour programs on successive nights—June 25, 26 and 27—to an examination of the major points of controversy over the Warren Commission Report on the Kennedy assassination.

A special unit under executive producer Leslie Midgley has been at work on the project for more than six months. Included in the programs will be filmed interviews, reconstruction of events and results of various tests and experiments, as well as what CBS News president Richard Salant described as "fresh material." Salant said the programs would "present the conclusions of CBS News based on our analysis and investigations." Salant said the idea of a single, three-hour telecast was discarded as being "too much to ask of the viewers' attention span for so complex and controversial a series of questions and issues."

It was the Merv Griffin Show, not Ch. 5, that "scrambled" the sound on Wednesday night's video-tape, during Tony Randall's observations on some of the TV sponsor-blurbs. A Griffin spokesman said there was concern over possible lawsuits from the brand-names mentioned. Sound scrambling is, of course, merely a variation on the old blip-bleep method of TV tape alterations. Some broadcasters feel it isn't as obvious. The idea is that most viewers chalk it up to some unexplained technical difficulty and let it pass.