

Televi-views

'People Trap,' 'Clown,' Peter Falk

By Lou Cedrone, Jr.

THIS IS television for you—in a season wanting for specials, two met head on Wednesday forcing viewers to make a difficult choice and critics to catch what they could in closed circuit previews.

The two programs were "The People Trap" on "Stage 67", and "Clown Alley," a valentine to a diminishing art.

"People Trap," based on a story by Robert Sheckley, author of "Tenth Victim," was an expensive, earnest attempt to show what life might be like in the year 2067 if the population explosion continues to blast away.

Stuart Whitman was a history teacher whose wife was illegally pregnant; a license was necessary, and those guilty of unlicensed conception, had to serve time and forfeit the child.

The husband, desperate to keep the child, joined a race for one of the last 20 acres of unoccupied land left in the United States. To get that acre, he had to go from the Battery to Times Square, a trip, which because of the people-choked streets, took about three weeks.

You can see what the producers



Whitman

of this futuristic drama were up against having to simulate such conditions, and I'm sorry to say they weren't too successful. I never really got the feeling this was more than a television playlet trying to make a point; the movie version of "Tenth Victim" did much better despite the amateurish dubbing.

"People Trap," as we are inclined to say, was full of holes, and while we might excuse some by saying any drama of this sort would be, you can't excuse all. The people were too well dressed, too seemingly content, and the murderers who chased the hero because he refused to sign a contract that would give the land to a gang lord, seemed to have less trouble keeping up with their quarry than he did running the race.

Also, from what the script said, population control measures had been in effect for at least a decade before the drama began; shouldn't they have had some effect?

Oh, well, maybe I'm too particular here. Maybe we should heed the warning Sheckley is sounding rather than haggle about the inconsistencies of the plot; surely the drama did make something of a point at the end when the teacher and his wife ran across their land as a fence held out the buzzing hordes eying them with envy. They should do "People Trap" as a movie. With more care and attention to detail, it ought to make a good one.

Vera Miles was the teacher's wife, and others in the cast were Connie Stevens, Lee Grant, Lew Ayres, Pearl Bailey, Phil Harris, Mercedes McCambridge and Mort Sahl. Best were Miss Stevens as the daughter of the gang boss and Miss McCambridge as a derelict living in an old auto. And that brings up another point — with space in such demand, why auto graveyards?

CBS-TV may not drop "Run, Buddy, Run," after all. Its ratings rose a few points, and that makes them think in New York and Hollywood. . . .

That three-hour discussion on the Warren Commission report which Channel 5 will show tomorrow at 8 P.M., asks a few interesting questions about President's Kennedy's assassination but gives no answers, and that's about all these men, authors of books on the assassination, can do—question but give no satisfactory answers. Most interesting was the story from one newsman who listed about twelve people who were connected in some way with the assassination and have since died, some, he implies, under strange circumstances. I was beginning to believe he may have something there when he included Dorothy Kilgallen. She had a private interview with Jack Ruby. At any rate, it is most interesting though as much might have been said in, at the most, two hours. Jim Bishop is moderator.



Williams